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"the Rhythm Of The Visible World": Music, Text And Performance In Selected Writings Of Edith Sitwell, Gertrude Stein And Virginia Woolf

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by

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ABSTRACT

"The rhythms of the visible world": Music and Performance in Selected Writings of Edith Sitwell, Gertrude Stein and Virginia Woolf.

This study examines the presence of musical innovations in the language of individual works of Edith Sitwell, Gertrude Stein, and Virginia Woolf. *Façade*, *Four Saints in Three Acts*, and *Between the Acts*, all use the techniques of transformative musical forms in their own literary disruption in conventional forms. These works reveal an interaction between musical forms and literary forms, whether analogous (as in *Between the Acts*) or literal (*Façade* and *Four Saints in Three Acts*) the experiment of music in writing and the location of literary experiment by women writers generally in a historical context. For these writers, the ephemeral process of performance, rather than the concrete existence of fixed text, questions the rigid distinctions between modes of expression and offers a dynamic opportunity for interchange, borrowings, and play between them. The thesis suggests that both language and music operate as loose referential systems which are in a dynamic dialogue with one another. Collaboration in musical theatre operates on a dialogic model not only in the writing process, between librettist and composer, but also in the process of performance. Dialogue in opera and in the novel is dependent on an active interchange of voices and on the specific blurring of

disciplinary boundaries. Sitwell puts a concern with sound and rhythm over a concern with 'sense,' or rather she expands the notion of 'sense' in poetry, offering a symbolist "derangement of the senses" in the manner of Stein. In setting her unconventional libretto to accessible, playful music, Thomson offers a performance of Stein's textual techniques: the opera emphasizes the self-reflexive, rhythmic, and above all playful, qualities of Stein's text. The interdisciplinary project in *Between the Acts* has the 'de-familiarization' of accepted generic forms as its goal. In all these works, notions of dialogue are expanded to include not only the specifically discursive content of language, but also other modes of expression. Where music and language overlap in meaning production *and* evasion, discourse is revealed to be performative and unconfinable. Language is revealed, in these writers' work, to be a shady and shifting ground for political assertion and subversion.

Keywords: music, performance, Stein, Sitwell, Woolf, genre, theatre, interdisciplinary, collaboration

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Introduction

. . . it was during that summer that she first felt the desire to express the rhythm of the visible world.

Gertrude Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*

In the *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, Alice's persona describes Gertrude Stein as captivated by the rhythms of Spanish culture and as determined to translate them, and the rhythms of the visible world, into her writing, first in "Susie Asado" and then in *Four Saints in Three Acts*. I argue in this dissertation that not only Stein but also Edith Sitwell and Virginia Woolf engage in a process of expression which is responsive to desire, to the senses, to rhythm and to crossovers between sensory media. In its examination of *Façade* (1922), *Four Saints in Three Acts* (1934), and *Between the Acts* (1941), this project will attempt to explicate the procedure of this transformation, looking at the ways in which these writers initiate textual performance, or text-as-performance. Through collaboration with composers, Stein and Sitwell move the printed page onto the stage and into voice and gesture. Through reference to performance, reference to the figure of the composer, and enactment of a performative method in written text, Woolf's novel offers a model of language which is both representational and evasive -- rhythmic.

This thesis proposes a dialogic model of collaboration in musical theatre not only in the writing process, between

librettist and composer, but also in the process of performance. In proposing a multivocal model of opera, the critic engages in what John Mowitt calls an "antidisciplinary" act, noting the active interchange of voices, dialogue between music and text in performance, and the specific blurring of disciplinary boundaries. This study proposes an inclusive notion of dialogue which encompasses not only the specifically discursive content of language but also other modes of expression: music, sets, choreography, figure movement and gesture, and, of course, voice. Analysis of text-music dialogue is nearly impossible if they are assumed to be distinct disciplines since disciplinary categories are in themselves monologic. However, in opera or musical settings of poems, the ephemeral process of performance, rather than the physical existence of fixed text, questions the rigid distinctions between modes of expression or articulation and offers a dynamic opportunity for interchange, borrowings, and play between them. In the novel, as well, this dialogic model of writing is directly enacted in narrative, and disciplinary fixity is questioned both through the representation of other types of discourses, and through disruption of conventional narrative or discursive structures. By moving outside conventional narrative structures of time, both language and music reveal themselves to be performative, constituted in the fleeting now.

Unlike the other two women in this study, Edith Sitwell has been surprisingly neglected critically, and her collaboration with William Walton, though anecdotally important in modernist mythology, remains unexplored. The collaboration between Sitwell and Walton on *Façade* began in the early 1920's (the first performance was in 1922), and it was an example of all three Sitwells' interest in and patronage of younger artists. She wrote the poems knowing they were to be set to music and this knowledge is directly reflected in her experiments with language. Her work attempts to negotiate between accepted notions of language as fixed in meaning and an impulse towards the greater flexibility of expression. She found this flexibility in the discourses of music and performance. Sitwell's experiments not only with genre and an ironic use of form, but also with the discourses of gender and racial identity which are allied with her musical collaboration. This alliance produces a vision of representation -- poetic, musical, ideological -- which loses transparency. Language is revealed, in Sitwell's work, to be a shady and shifting ground for political assertion and subversion. Walton's musical dialogue with Sitwell's text makes clear this ambiguous landscape of expression: the music gestures towards representation through parody but, being music, escapes the concrete, while the language gestures away from representation, towards music, through sound, rhythm and the consistent evasion of meaning.

Unlike Sitwell, Gertrude Stein's innovations in prose have served to define an aspect of modernist aesthetics for generations. Virgil Thomson helped to redefine American musical aesthetics throughout his long life as a composer. My discussion is both a study of their collaboration and an attempt to define a cross-disciplinary method. As a result, I define music as discursive in the same way, though not to the same degree, as language. I see both composer and writer as engaged in a struggle with conventional discourses -- Stein struggling with prose conventions and Thomson with tonal music. Stein's work with the discourses of prose is (to quote Edith Sitwell) "the anarchic breaking up and rebuilding of sleepy families of words and phrases" (AMP 215), while Thomson's music, in Marianne DeKoven's words, "shifts continually, like a kaleidoscope turning, from fragment to unresolved fragment, mode to mode" (141). Both re-create discourse through parody, repetition, fragmentation and juxtaposition. The materials of this collaboration certainly share an analogous attitude towards discursive structures. More specifically, the libretto and the music of *Four Saints in Three Acts* operate in dialogue with one another. Stein's play with language moves away from reference just as Thomson's music moves towards reference and, somewhere in the middle, they meet for a moment.

At the beginning of their friendship, Thomson set a few of Stein's prose-poems, and though she knew little about music, she liked the result. They agreed to collaborate on

Four Saints in Three Acts. Stein decided, according to Thomson, to make the subject of her libretto the "working artist's working life" and set the opera in Spain making St. Theresa and St. Ignatius her main characters. She turned the libretto over to Thomson in 1927 and he set it to music. Neither had much input into the creative process of the other: Stein gave him a complete manuscript and Thomson changed very little of it. It was finally premiered in 1934 in Hartford, Connecticut, and later had a very brief run on Broadway. Stein never saw this first production and Thomson had almost complete control over the initial approach to the staging. Nevertheless, Thomson was deeply engaged with Stein's language. While Sitwell's poems focus on the specific interchange between disembodied voice and musical settings, and Woolf's novel on the narrative representation of performance, Stein's opera incorporates not only narrative theatre, musical dialogue, and invention in language, but also the physical staging of the work. Opera is perhaps the most dialogic of the three genres here discussed, at least in its incorporation of many diverse discourses, from text to music to gesture and staging. The multitude of collaborators on *Four Saints* added differing voices to Stein's libretto, which is itself full of multiplications and repetitions. The music-text dialogue in the opera emphasizes the discursive nature of music and the anti-discursive bent of Stein's language. Through repetition, mutual reference, and punning,

the music and the text disrupt the narrative expectations of opera, even as they allude to them.

Between the Acts is Virginia Woolf's last novel, and it was published after her suicide in 1941. This fact gives the novel a special poignancy since it struggles with the nature of art, narrative and even the function of language in text and performance. Although this is the only work in my study that has no direct collaborative origin, it is influenced by a multitude of conflicting discourses and personalities. Woolf's friendship with the composer Ethel Smyth is directly reflected in the character of the writer/ director in the novel, Miss LaTrobe, and indirectly in the novel's experiments with narrative and language. Like the first two works, *Between the Acts* looks at disciplinary discourses, like imperialism and gender, and disrupts their monologic function. Further, it questions the monologic status of narrative and the authorial voice by introducing various conflicting and incomplete dialogues. Ultimately, the novel offers a somewhat nihilistic view of language as both evasive and limiting.

I am not making claims for a documentable mutual influence between these writers. Instead, I think they engage in a similar experiment with language and form, initiated and supported by their interest in music specifically and collaboration and multivocality generally. As well, these women are influenced by shared cultural contexts and associations. A few critics have noted and

explored similarities between Sitwell and Stein. Marjorie Perloff has traced Sitwell's own claim of her debt to Stein, but Perloff discounts any real connection between the writers. Cyrena Pondrom, on the other hand, traces Sitwell's references to Stein but also goes on to suggest a more fluid model for influence, closer to intertextuality, which concentrates on a shared cultural context rather than a power relationship between teacher and taught: "Usually focused on linear, single-source, and uni-directional relationships, traditional influence study has not possessed the vocabulary necessary to describe the interaction of polymorphous 'sources' that overdetermine the characteristics manifested by a ‹ ·ven literary work" (Pondrom 205). Pondrom suggests that these two writers share more than simply a mutual knowledge of (and unequal respect for) each other's work. They also share a similar cultural climate and set of influences: both writer's have "relationships to the French symbolists' literary successors, Apollinaire, Cocteau, and the surrealists" as well as Picasso, the cubists and Satie (204). Although Woolf was ambivalent about other experimental writers, Rachel Blau DuPlessis establishes a reluctant relationship between her work and Stein's, documented at least by familiarity if not by acknowledgment of influence: "one might . . . attempt the notion that later Woolf (including *The Waves* and *Between the Acts*) was challenged by the formal designs, the repetitions, the grids, the critique of the center, the other otherness of the work

of Gertrude Stein" (101). DuPlessis suggests a relationship in narrative strategies and resistance to convention, particularly gender conventions, in both Woolf and Stein.

Sitwell and Stein share, as public figures, infamy, notoriety and the distinction of being pioneers in their time as experimental women writers. Their lives are imbued with a sense of the performative since they both cultivate a careful public image which included defenses against a potentially hostile (masculine) literary community. This performative element extends to both women's writing, most obviously through their collaborations with composers, but also through their experiments with shifting and playful language. Patrick Smith, in *The Tenth Muse*, makes the implicit connection between Stein's and Sitwell's experiments with the sound of language. He suggests that *Façade* has a surrealist influence (a claim she would have denied) and suggests that in "shattering the structure of language itself. . . linear coherence was not the only coherence possible, and that assonance and word patterns and repetitions could establish their own meanings" (396). Similarly Stein's librettos "represent the final and complete liberation of the word from its prison as a meaning symbol so that it becomes a sound or collection of sounds" (397). Smith asserts that these experiments cannot be solely attributed to Dadaist influence and reinforces the similarities between Stein's work and that of Erik Satie, complementing Thomson's influences and as we shall see Sitwell's and Walton's also.

A few studies tracing the relationship between music, performance and Woolf's experiments with narrative form and language have been published (including my own article on *The Waves* and *Parsifal*). Many critics, notably Peter Jacobs, adopt the attitude of her authorized biographer, Quentin Bell, who claimed that "she was not, in any strict sense, musical. . . . Music, it is true delighted her . . . . But her taste for opera was . . . probably stimulated by Saxon [Sydney-Turner]; certainly he must have been responsible for the marked homage which she now paid to Wagner [by going to Bayreuth]" (quoted in DiGaetini 112). As DiGaetini points out, "Bell underestimates her musical interest; she went to far too many operas and concerts to regard them simply as background music or social events" (113). Several of the critics writing about *The Waves* and about Woolf's work in general have noticed the influence of music on her prose: Alex Aronson, Gerald Levin, William Blissett, Raymond Furness, Robin Gail Schulze, and Jane Marcus, to name a few. As well, while she does not engage in a direct discussion of influence, Patricia Laurence suggests that Woolf's use of rhythm or music is an attempt to speak the unspeakable in language: "It is a kind of metalanguage of which linguists dream and upon which poets insist, important because it communicates emotional and intellectual as well as aesthetic meaning" (172). For all these critics, Woolf's musicality, found in part through her friendship with Ethel Smyth, finds expression in the flexibility of her narrative form. Her use

of multiple voices, and or elisions, gaps and silences, make her novels almost operatic and performative. In *Between the Acts*, her friendship with Smyth is coupled with an extreme ambivalence towards the materials of fiction, and in this novel Woolf attempts a collage of drama, musical, and poem all in the format of the novel. In so doing, she transforms the genre.

The experiments in the arts in the first three decades of the twentieth-century, especially in France, had a wide-sweeping influence on modern writers in English. As Perloff and Pondrom have pointed out, the legacy of the symbolists, the surrealists, the cubists, Cocteau, Satie and *Les Six* survives in formal and interdisciplinary works of many writers contemporary to these artists. Sitwell, Stein and Woolf were no exception. These movements in art, theatre, music and poetry form a background to the specific experimentation in which Sitwell, Stein and Woolf engaged. Sitwell's two acknowledged influences were the symbolists and Gertrude Stein. William Walton and Virgil Thomson began composing during the musical period in which the Germans questioned tonality and the French questioned the very notion of art music. Stein, of course, served as *grande dame* of the arts in Paris for decades, and her list of friends ran the gamut from Apollinaire to Picasso to Hemingway. Woolf was also keenly aware of experiments in music and theatre, being constantly at the opera and at concerts, and in the visual arts, through her sister, Vanessa Bell the painter, and

through her friends Roger Fry and Clive Bell, who were critics and art historians. The art movements that I am about to discuss have in common, aside from their connection with the writers in my study, an interest in disrupting the discourses of conventional art. The symbolists were intent on creating a truly cross-disciplinary method in poetry and theatre. Like the writers and composers of this study, the principle figures in cubism, surrealism and *Les Six* repeated and fragmented the languages of convention, highlighting the the self-conscious construction of art and its connection to the social. What follows is a series of thumbnail sketches of these important cultural movements which I hope will capture the main elements that these movements share with the writers and composers discussed in my project.

Symbolism

The symbolists in France were active from about 1880 almost to the turn of the century and their aim was to revise conceptions of art, specifically poetry. Their interest in the work of Richard Wagner (finding its expression in *La Revue Wagnérienne*) influenced considerably their assumptions about the potential for poetic language and form. Specifically, the notion of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* and synesthesia allows Charles Baudelaire "to advance a theoretical hypothesis for a language of music and to set up a theoretical model within which this hypothesis is made exemplary and paradigmatic of modern art" (Deak 99).

Baudelaire's conception of poetic language was based on the notion that language, like music, carried sensation, and that the truly moving work of art operates primarily on the level of sensation. The more complex and diverse the sensation evoked by the art, the better. Music, in Baudelaire's view, is able to arouse concrete associations in the same way that language can: "what would be really surprising would be that sound could not suggest colour, that colours could not convey a melody, and that sound and colour were unsuited to translating ideas. Things have always been expressed by a reciprocal analogy" (Baudelaire 199). According to Frantisek Deak, this correspondence between sensation and language lends symbolist poetry a natural theatricality. The language of symbolism is performative. Deak suggests that Wagnerian music and symbolist language share an "epistemology" even while they do not share specific sign systems.

Taking the theatrical application further, Stéphane Mallarmé suggested that Wagnerian music-drama is the solution to a theatre limited by its "representational and illusionary nature" (Deak 103). As a symbolist Mallarmé rebelled against the notion that art is tied to specific reference. While language and music are associational or evocative, they should not be tied to the logocentric traditions of nineteenth-century theatre. The ideal theatre, of which Wagner's seems to be an example, is one in which "the audience, due to the beneficial influence of music, will receive a suggestion of reality without the intellectual

despotism of ordinary theater that asks its audience to believe in the reality of its representation" (Deak 103). Music theatre allows for an associational method of expression which invites a blurring of generic and discursive boundaries. In fact, Deak claims, the symbolists saw artistic media in semiotic terms, and these systems of loose designation made way for the potential crossover of diverse media. Theodor Wyzewa, in *La Revue Wagnérienne*, claimed that the semiotic basis of language allows for its translation into musical signification: "He splits the language signs into two parts, the ideatic and the musical (phonetic), and suggests a concept of poetry based on the musical relationships of the words (sonority, rhythm, melody) instead of their semantic relationship. 'They [the poets] no longer use the word for their values to convey ideas, but as sonorous syllables, evoking in sound emotions, through the means of harmonic alliances.'" (Deak 107). Of the three writers in this study, Edith Sitwell had the most openly acknowledged debt to the symbolists. Through her governess, Sitwell became very familiar with the symbolist poets, even to the point of translating a volume of Arthur Rimbaud's poetry. Sitwell's discussion of the importance of sensation, conveyed by and contained in language, as well as rhyme and especially rhythm, makes her debt to the symbolists very clear. Rimbaud, Mallarmé, Baudelaire and the other diverse poets, playwrights, novelists and painters who made up the symbolist movement all contributed to the experiments with

signification in the twentieth century -- both in language and music.

The symbolist inheritance extends also to the so-called stream-of-consciousness technique: the specific attention to reordering language and representing experience from an inner perspective. Melvin Friedman, in "The Symbolist Novel: Huysmans to Malraux" (1976), suggests that Virginia Woolf's novel *The Waves* is, in fact, a late symbolist novel (459). Woolf's particular narrative technique in that novel is an extension of the symbolist tradition of the "'monologue interieur'" established by Eduoard Dujardin. As well, she uses "symbols and turns of phrase as leitmotifs" (464). In *The Waves*, "characters are inextricably related to an insistent pattern of language and image which helps to create form, the 'expansion' rather than 'completion' that Forster sees as the emancipation of the modern novel" (463). Finally, the symbolist novels that Friedman chooses for discussion, *The Waves* included, "exist almost entirely in terms of clusters of images and verbal patterns" (461). Thus the influence of the symbolist legacy is wide ranging and its concerns related not only to the performative modes of poetry and music theatre but also to the modern novel.

Surrealism

Though none of the writers or composers in this project claims to have been influenced by surrealism (in fact Sitwell vehemently denied such an influence), they were all

acquainted with this art movement and some of its concerns are mirrored generally in their work. In spite of her protest, Sitwell's work moves closest to a relationship with surrealism in its emphasis on nonsense and rhythm as evocative of the dream-world. Just as the surrealists held that the irrational was a product of the unconscious mind, accessed only through dreams in Freudian psychoanalysis and seen in films like *Un Chien Andalou*, so Sitwell relied on the dream-world as a reference beyond the specific representation expected of language. As well, her insistence on this dream-world was linked closely to the use of sensation, whether in the language or the rhythm of the language. Sitwell shares with Stein, and to a lesser extent Woolf, a suggestion of the primal or elemental need for disruption of logocentric signification which is at the root of surrealism. This disruption sought by surrealists is a celebration of the irrational: "The barrier erected by the nonrational to block progress by reason marks the boundary beyond which surrealist images are located. It delimits the areas where comprehension no longer should be the reader's goal. At the same time, it indicates the crucial point at which reflective thought ceases to be the instrument of image-making by the poet or assimilation by his [or her] audience" (Matthews 115). Thus, the poetry of the surrealist is beyond rational understanding, beyond representation, at least of conscious contents. This evasion of explicit representation leads Matthews to suggest that surrealist language is flexible,

that it can cross disciplinary boundaries: "once surrealism began to gather momentum, just as the idea of poetry underwent expansion to embrace more than the use of words only, so application of the term *language* ceased to respect limitations no longer judged applicable, yielding to a broader definition" (2). As can be seen in Salvador Dalí's and Luis Buñuel's film, the irrational expansion of signification is created in part through a disruption of expectation, that is, through repetition and fragmentation of conventional expression. Like the cubists, the surrealist employed collage to effect this transformation: "By introducing through collage features which no text or context demands or authorizes, the surrealist gives his or her image an orientation for which neither the written word nor prescribed use (in the case of illustrative material borrowed from catalogs) can offer justification or explanation. What such a collage does, in effect, is tamper with narrative context" (139-140). I have no direct evidence to suppose that these writers were influenced either by Freud or by the surrealists. However, Woolf, Stein and Sitwell all aim to destabilize conventional paradigms of signification and traditional ideologies of certainty. As well, their materials all defy, to a lesser or greater degree, sense and reason, and this defiance appears at times to claim a psychoanalytic explanation.

Les Six

All three authors in this project, as well as the two composers, were aware of the experiments in French theatre undertaken by Erik Satie and the group known as *Les Six*. Virgil Thomson specifically claimed to be influenced far more by these French composers (living as he did in Paris) than by the Germans who were experimenting with atonality. As an early iconoclast, and then in his connection with *Les Six*, Erik Satie sought a new French art-music style that would acknowledge French popular culture. Jean Cocteau, *Les Six*'s main mouthpiece and Satie's collaborator, "claimed principally that Satie and his followers were replacing the loftiness of nineteenth century German music and French Impressionism with a truly French music characterized by brevity, earthiness and the use of popular sources" (Perloff, Nancy 4). Much of Satie's early piano music explores the roots of this style: it is mostly diatonic, repetitive and directionless -- melodic but without linearity. In his collaborative ballet project, *Parade* (1918), Satie adds to this style a tendency to quote or paraphrase popular musical genres. In *Parade* Satie used "the materials of everyday life in order to challenge traditional aesthetic criteria and to make art referential" (Perloff 15). As well, the style Satie employed in this ballet is much like Thomson's style in *Four Saints in Three Acts*: "In the ostinati of *Parade*, melodic movement is repetitive and constant throughout, and beginning and end cannot be distinguished" (126). This music went on to influence the others of *Les Six* for close to a decade.

Not only was the music of Satie a profound influence on Thomson, but *Parade* was also one of the first experiments in "cubist" theatre. With sets and costumes designed by Pablo Picasso, the scenario by Jean Cocteau, and the choreography by Massine, the whole event was a clear statement of the French avant-garde. In this cubist theatre, "the stage, like the canvas [and like language for Stein], became a surface for an aesthetic project, a radical interpretation of reality translated into stage icons" (Glover 102). Satie's score followed this cubist paradigm of fragmentation and planar disruption: "isolated fragments of incomplete melodies . . . create pulsating patterns of recurring rhythms" (34). The stage and the music are the subject of their own representation rather than being a vehicle to a representation. Both are self-referential while maintaining a direct reference to popular culture (the French music hall) and art culture (cubism, ballet).

In his manifesto for *Les Six*, "Coq et l'Arlequin," Cocteau emphasizes the importance of incorporating elements of popular culture, the music hall and the jazz band, into the new work of art. He emphasizes the independence of musical ideas, as snapshot and fragment, but allows that each is integrally related to another. As well, Cocteau celebrates the unpopularity of the artist who creates something new as a kind of badge of courage: "WE HAVE IN OUR KEEPING AN ANGEL WHOM WE ARE CONTINUALLY SHOCKING. WE MUST BE THIS ANGEL'S GUARDIAN. Take care to conceal your capacity

to work miracles, for 'if they know you were a missionary they would tear out your tongue and nails.' What are the thoughts of a canvas on which a masterpiece is being painted? 'I am being soiled, brutally treated and concealed from view.' Thus men grumble at their destiny, however fair" (Cocteau 319-20). This attitude bears a striking resemblance to Gertrude Stein's claims in "What Are Master-pieces and Why Are There So Few of Them" (1940), and in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, that innovative art is inevitably ugly. The great new artist strives for ugliness. The role of the artist in this second decade of the twentieth century was to take the materials of modern life and defamiliarize them. Opposed to the religious fervour of German Romanticism (of which he perceived Schoenberg to be the tag-end) and opposed to the French Impressionists, Cocteau insisted on the importance of discontinuity and silence: "The Impressionists feared bareness, emptiness, silence. Silence is not necessarily a hole; you must use silence and not a stopgap of vague noises" (311). Silence becomes in music and language the enactment of the absent presence, or the gap in signification that modernists point towards. The doubtful nature of signification is also highlighted in a disjunctive approach to repetition, an absence of narrative continuity. Constantly comparing the musical procedure of Satie and *Les Six* to cubist art, Cocteau maintains that art is a process of fragmentation and juxtaposition. In Parade, "the numerous themes each distinct from the other, like separate objects,

succeed one another, without being developed and do not get entangled" (314). The crossover between the arts that *Parade* strives for and that Cocteau implies with his comparisons between music, art and poetry seems to have its roots in an almost symbolist conception of signification: "All good music resembles something. Good music arouses emotion owing to its mysterious resemblance to the objects and feelings which have occasioned it. Resemblance in music does not consist in representation, but in the strength of dissembled truth" (318). Thus, cultural objects are split off from their accepted forms of representation and set in motion by their juxtaposition with one another. The lack of traditional coherence inevitable with this creative process opens up signification to silence and to freedom from the despotism of representation.

Cubism

Gertrude Stein's relationship with Pablo Picasso is one of those narratives that assumes a central place in the myth of modernism. Their friendship and mutual influence is legendary and amply documented, and their projects aspire to a similar goal: refiguring representation. Edith Sitwell and Virginia Woolf were also familiar with the work of the cubists, though not as intimately involved as Stein, and Picasso's interests crossed over into the world of *Parade* as well. Once again, the cubists sought to disrupt conventional visual signification through fragmentation and juxtaposition:

"In place of earlier perspective systems that determined the precise location of discrete objects in illusory depth, Cubism offered an unstable structure of dismembered planes in indeterminate spatial positions. Instead of assuming that the work of art was an illusion of a reality that lay beyond it, Cubism proposed that the work of art was itself a reality that represented the very process by which nature is transformed into art" (Rosenblum 13). Not only is the illusion of depth vanquished in cubism, but so is the discrete separation of objects. In portraiture, for example, the figure becomes mixed in with the planar relations of its surroundings. This revision of the materials and subjects of visual art is not representational so much as self-referential, art about art.

The spatial ambivalence which destroys the comfort of perspective also gives the canvas movement, effectively rendering it performative: comparing Braque's *Houses at L'Estaque* (1909) with a landscape from a year earlier, Rosenblum suggests "that the clearly defined planes of 1908 have finally become unhinged and that the earlier structure was only a house of cards that now flutters and floats in complete disregard to gravity" (Rosenblum 32). Not only does perspective lose its discipline over the image, but also the physical laws of gravity are broken. Cubist paintings violate the control of the syntax of representation. They question traditional visual discourses. In their preoccupation with shifting spatial relations, these

paintings also disrupt any notion of temporal certainty: In Picasso's *Girl with Mandolin* (1909), "the spectator is obliged to assume that the figure is pieced together of fragments taken from multiple and discontinuous viewpoints. The ambiguous quality of time in a Cubist painting derives from this very phenomenon, for one senses neither duration nor instantaneity, but rather a composite time of fragmentary moments without permanence or sequential continuity" (43). In other words, these paintings are without linear narrative, and they operate in a discontinuous present (not unlike Stein's notion of static theatre operating in *continuous* present).

Perhaps the most crucial for our purposes here is the cubist development of *collage*. Collage explicitly violates the disciplinary assumptions of "painting" since it incorporates non-paint objects into the art work. As well, it questions, once again, the very nature of representation through the repetition of cultural fragments or motifs:

> Perhaps the greatest heresy introduced in this collage [*Still Life With Chair Caning*, 1912] concerns Western painting's convention that the artist achieve his [or her] illusion of reality with paint or pencil alone. Now Picasso extends his creative domain to materials that had previously been excluded from the world of canvas or paper and obliges these real fragments from a nonartistic world to play surprisingly unreal roles in a new artistic world. . . . [T]he true elements pasted

> into the picture are even falser than the large fiction of the Cubist still life. . . . Once more, these fragments of reality are made to perform roles even more unreal than those implied by their simple function (68).

The collage in art takes fragments of the real and makes them represent themselves, but by juxtaposing them with other fragments, their lack of representation, or their lack of reference, is revealed. The illusion of a boundary separating art from reality, or a language from its reference, is questioned through repetition. In all three writers, Sitwell, Stein and Woolf, we can see the attempt to cross this very boundary by similar means. Instead of chair caning and rope, however, these writers and the composers they collaborated with chose to repeat and fragment other cultural discourses, language and music. This repetition serves to highlight the artificial, as opposed to representational, nature of the artistic act, and it opens the door to a dialogue between modes of cultural discourse -- whether paint and chair caning or music and word.

Keeping in mind the historical context, this dissertation will not only engage in an analysis of the three works introduced here but will also suggest a methodology for pursuing inter- or *anti*-disciplinary dialogues in performed art. In Chapter One, I lay out the methodology for the more specific analyses to follow. This chapter proposes a "sliding scale" of signification that disrupts a conventionally assumed binary of meaning production in

language, and this disruption allows for the looser signification of music to be included as discourse in a performance. In fact, I suggest an alternative model of text based not on conventional physical conceptions of the page or the score but on performance. Finally, the disruption of conventional disciplinary distinctions has specific ideological implications. Chapter Two is a comparison of the three writers under discussion. By reviewing the current criticism of Sitwell, Woolf, and Stein, we can see a common attention in these writers to disruptions of disciplinary and generic certainties and an experimentation with language. In Chapter Three, Edith Sitwell's poems for *Façade* are analyzed for their discussion of imperialism, gender, genre and language, and this analysis is contrasted to William Walton's settings of the poems. Walton's response to Sitwell's text emphasizes its potential for excess, moving just outside the boundaries of conventional signification. In the musical theatre of Gertrude Stein and Virgil Thomson, the topic of Chapter Four, the disruption of conventional drama, character, narrative, and theatrical representation in the libretto are supported and contrasted by the score's manipulation of musical conventions and discourses. The elements of the performance besides music and text also figure considerably into the overall analysis. *Between the Acts*, the most conventional of all the works discussed here, forms the subject of the fifth and final chapter. Woolf's novel acts as a representation of the multidiscursive and

multivocal performance. However, the novel's discussion of language reveals a dilemma faced by the impulse to antidisciplinary discussion: strictly representational language is, in Woolf's novel, tyrannous language, but complete evasion of that discipline means losing language altogether. In this novel, antidisciplinary art is necessary but deeply ambivalent.

Chapter One: Sliding from Music to Words

The study of *Façade*, *Four Saints in Three Acts* and *Between the Acts*, especially in comparison with one another, requires an interdisciplinary methodology. This chapter will be largely devoted to the exploration of the music/ text criticism of the past as well as contemporary innovations. Interdisciplinary music/ text criticism has had a lengthy presence in the history of twentieth-century thought. Early music/ literature comparisons, before 1970, tended to reinforce the disciplinary boundaries between both, and these attempts at comparison have been largely disregarded by the greater musicological and literary communities of scholarship. Musicologists and music theorists have had a strong resistance to the notion that music is, and can be read as, a historically inflected, ideologically loaded social discourse, like language. Instead, this field of study focuses on the technical or mathematical dimension of composition or the historical dimension of performance practice.[1] However, some music scholars are becoming increasingly interested in theoretical developments in other disciplines (such as sociology and literature) and are beginning to incorporate these notions of discourse into a specific examination of music. In order to develop a methodology for this project, this chapter will examine new music theory in conjunction with poststructuralist conceptions of language and representation. I will begin by

reviewing the history of interdisciplinary criticism up to current conceptions of musical discourse, and then suggest a theory and methodology for approaching the collaboration between writer and composer and the interchange between music and text.

While it offers useful detailed and complex discussions of musical form, conventional music theory operates within tight disciplinary confines. Following the absolutist programs of such philosophers as Eduard Hanslick and theorists as Heinrich Schenker[2], most academics have seen music as a self-contained art form: the ultimate "art for art's sake". "Theory" is a mathematical discussion of form alone: musicology discusses textual dissemination, performance practice and condition in western art music, and ethnomusicology attempts to discover the workings of music in nonwestern cultures. The last often approaches a culturally based criticism, but that criticism is rarely turned on the "source" culture: the western experts go in search of "primitive" music secure in the belief that theirs has evolved beyond the point of social utility. The result of this proscription is a critical practice opposed not only to the notion that music has meaning, social or otherwise, but also to the idea that texts can cross disciplinary boundaries. If music has no referent, then interdisciplinary criticism can never move beyond the deployment of weak analogies.

Many recent critics have pointed to the absence of interdisciplinary borrowings in theory and musicology and have noted that the lack of disciplinary exploration has limited the flexibility of music theory. For music study to become multivocal and productive of new insights, it must become interdisciplinary. In his book *Unsuspected Eloquence*, James Winn attempts a broad historical survey of interdisciplinary thinking under the governing thesis that "the rhythm and melodic qualities we associate with music are also present in poetry, accounting for some of its power and meaning" (2). Winn suggests that the twentieth-century conception of music as transcendent and nonrepresentational can be traced back to Hanslick's critiques of Wagner. Hanslick claimed that music is only about itself, that it bears no relation to the social sphere. Curiously, this notion of artistic purity swallows up the attempts at the melding of poetry and music by the symbolists as theorized by Walter Pater. Pater's assertion, paraphrased from Schopenhauer, that "all art aspires towards the condition of music" ironically reinforces Hanslick's original notion of the inviolability of the art of music and offers the same transcendent value to the other arts especially through the symbolist movement "in its fascination with sound, its hostility to ordinary syntax, and most of all its attempt to make the poem a self-contained world" (Winn 297). As Alan Durant points out in *Conditions of Music*, Pater's 'condition' of art-as-music is, like Hanslick's, an ideal of purity in

non reference: "the aspiration of the arts is towards a pleasure in condition without conditions, a condition at all times and in all places identical, even as surrounding conditions shift and vary" (93). That is, in Hanslick's and Pater's terms music is nonrepresentational and therefore without cultural or ideological associations. It is an art form free from the restrictions of material conditions. It is transcendent, universal, and self-contained and thus approaches the divine. Any other art that aspires to the same condition -- non-reference, self-containment -- is similarly blessed, free from worldly taint. This attitude towards art carries over, as Winn points out, into the theories of the literary New Critics and continues today as the governing principle of music theory.

Early Music/Text Criticism

Traditional (before 1970 or thereabouts) interdisciplinary theory, like its contemporary counterpart, has been concerned mainly with the possibility for reference in music as it exists (according to these critics) in language. The model of language and literature invoked by most of these theorists is of one-to-one correspondence between word and thing, language always pointing away from itself to the world "out there." Music, on the other hand, is perhaps emotionally evocative, but it only points to itself, formally speaking anyway. In "Literature and Music" Bertrand Bronson maintains that while music may stir the

emotions, add to the drama of an opera[3], even become associated with particular ideas, it cannot be adopted directly by literature: "to assume that the verbal arts can adopt and exploit the formal patterns and technical devices of music, even in their simplest states, with the same or similar effects, is to be beguiled by the specious logic of a shared terminology" (129). That is, the difference between form and content, or object and effect, is absolute; how does music produce drama without language? how can music represent 'ideas' and still not share a technique with language? These questions remain necessarily unanswered. Northrop Frye offers a musical model of poetry in which "a quality in literature denotes a substantial analogy to, and in many cases an actual influence from, the art of music" (xi). Frye proposes that tonal music is an enactment of chaos threatening (dissonance) the divine order (tonal resolution) but also contained by that order. This pattern (chaos contained by order) may also be seen in poetry. Though Frye's subsequent elaboration never suggests more than formal analogies between music and literature, his introduction suggests the possibility of blurred boundaries. Perhaps one of the most influential of the early interdisciplinary critics, Calvin S. Brown, was also one of the most discouraging of any meaningful exchange between the arts. In *Music and Literature* (1948), he strictly maintains a division between the external reference of words and the internal reference of musical notes. Though music may evoke

vague emotional states (found outside language presumably) and it and poetry are both "arts presented through the sense of hearing" (11), musical notes have "no relationship to anything outside the musical composition" whereas literature is "an art employing sounds to which external significance has been arbitrarily attached" (11). Brown's vision of successful literature includes formal pattern but he insists that "it must communicate something outside that pattern, though in keeping with it and reinforced by it" (270). In *Tones Into Words* (1953), Brown qualifies his separation to some extent by suggesting that rhythms and percussive effects of music can be successfully imitated in poetry, though presumably in neither art do these elements have outside reference. Nevertheless, he ends the book by suggesting that the only poetic work that can come close to imitation or description of a musical work is the "moral allegory". Though this would imply some latent content in music, Brown does not develop this suggestion. In a 1984 article "The Writing and Reading of Language and Music", Brown suggests that the "fundamental difference" (8) between music and words has no bearing on the mental process by which the reader recreates the *sound* of either a musical text or a written word text, and in the last paragraph he admits that the "fundamental difference" is not so fundamental after all, that music can refer in certain circumstances.

Two theorists in the 1950s made significant contributions to the interdisciplinary debate in their very

different attempts to assign external significance to musical events. Deryck Cooke, in *The Language of Music* (1959), defies conventional wisdom by claiming that "music is . . . a language of the emotions, akin to speech" (33). Cooke's theories were in direct opposition to the New Critical style of music theorists devoted to ideas of musical purity *á la* Hanslick (Stravinsky, for example, was a strong proponent of formalism). Cooke rejected the idea of music as "notes considered as purely aural and intellectual experiences, as abstract concepts, as technical counters" (198). Instead, he argued for (an equally debatable) Romantic conception of the music as "the current of the composer's emotion, of which the 'notes' are the musical transformation" (199). Though he acknowledges (paradoxically) the forces of style, tradition and convention, Cooke claims that at root the language of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century music is a natural and universal one, and even provides a little key to the emotional association of every interval on the seven-note scale; for example, a minor second equals "spiritless anguish" while a major third equals "joy" (90). Leonard Meyer, in *Emotion and Meaning in Music* (1956), offers a more compelling and more fully interdisciplinary theory, though Joseph Kerman claims in *Contemplating Music* that Meyer's ideas were largely ignored by the musicological academy. While denying the capacity of music to refer explicitly outside itself and thus remaining in the formalist camp, Meyer asserts that music nevertheless has emotional content,

or that it can induce an emotional state in its listener. By manipulating and disrupting conventional musical signs, which are entirely unnatural in the sense that they are produced by culture and influenced by history, politics and so on, the composer creates expectations in the listener which are frustrated (producing affect) and finally satisfied (producing contentment).[4] Again, a theory of affective music relies on violation of conventional signs, and admittedly sounds a bit like Frye's heaven-and-hell argument, but Meyer was radical in suggesting that the real 'meaning' of music is to be located in the historically and socially specific performance, particularly in the reaction of the listener, not the formal properties of the notes on a page or the emotional state of the composer.[5] Many interdisciplinary theorists of the same time period adopted what seems to be a semiotic approach, though without the elaborate methodology that was to follow. Suzanne K. Langer, for example, combined the theories of C.S. Peirce with Gestalt theory to create a more flexible semiotic model for art than existed for language systems. Langer proposed the artistic "symbol" as an organic whole "adapted to the explication of 'unspeakable' things, though it lacks the cardinal value of language, which is denotation" (in Innis 105). Langer's theories were influential. She, like Meyer, has the advantage of flexibility, moving outside the reference/ nonreference binary in a search for social meaning in music.

One of the most fruitful connections between art philosophy before 1950 and contemporary cultural theory lies in the resurfacing of the work of Theodor Adorno. After years of living in Hollywood, in exile from the German Nazis, Adorno published *The Philosophy of Modern Music* (1948). As one of the important philosophers associated with the Frankfurt school, Adorno engages in a materialist critique of cultural production, especially of the music that was modern before his exile. Focusing mainly on Schoenburg and Stravinsky, "[h]e states that forms of art reflect the history of man more truthfully than do documents" ("Translator's Introduction" ix). He sees atonality as a direct response to the decay of modern capitalist cultures and he condemns neo-classicism as an empty bourgeois retreat from historical reality. Comparing modern music to its contemporary experiments in visual arts and their increasing avoidance of representation, Adorno links music with the commodification of art in capitalist economies:

> The liberation of modern painting from objectivity, which was to art the break that atonality was to music, was determined by the defensive against the mechanized art commodity -- above all photography. Radical music, from its inception, reacted similarly to the commercial depravity of the traditional idiom. It formulated an antithesis against the extension of the cultural industry into its own domain. . . . The non-conceptual and non-objective element in music which, since

> Schopenhauer, has accounted for music's appeal to irrational philosophy, has served only to harden it against the market place mentality (5).

He goes on to argue that only the commodification of music in sound recording and film has resulted in a shift to ever more extreme distance from the "conceptual" or the "objective" -- exemplified in the work of Schoenberg. Adorno's philosophy has a direct line into contemporary social theory through Attali, as we shall see. Although Adorno still seems to claim for music an ability to avoid an explicit discursive function, he sketches out a productive, early theory for the historical roots of changing art forms. In Adorno's philosophy, music is a socially produced text which he uses to read the cultural currents of the society in general.

New Theories in Interdisciplinarity

The narrative of music as a scholarly discipline, as was literary theory until the last two or three decades, is one of an uneasy and fiercely repressive containment. The options for musicological research move from denial of social, ideological or indeed any reference in music through the construction of music and language as parallel but never converging disciplines to notions of antidisciplinarity in a multivocal and unfixed (postsemiotic) textuality. Music critics who question the social/ ideological context (or content) of the music they study are necessarily calling into question the very stability of the discipline as a

structuring ideal of academia. For the critic wishing to move beyond the artificial limitations of his or her scholarly practice, the "discipline" is the punishing boundary to be transgressed. Specifically for music-literary theorists, the foremost area of transgression is the notion that music may carry if not semantic then ideological associations. Many of the poststructuralist-influenced music critics who are beginning to voice dissension from the previously monologic definitions of the musicological discipline have argued in more or less flexible terms for the referring possibilities in music.

In his book, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, Carl Dahlhaus takes Adorno to task over his still-Romantic conceptions of music. The book as a whole historicizes and critiques the evolution of the notion of absolute music, an art of and for itself. He traces the theological paradigm that underlies this concept, as articulated by Hanslick, and even before him, Wagner. Linked, in Dahlhaus's conception, to Romantic ideals of the "unspeakable," music is conceived of by absolutists as a language beyond language, of concealed divine origins. This notion of absolute music has kept the study of music secure from the influence of other disciplines, so much so that, as Joseph Kerman points out, theories such as new historicism, feminism, and deconstruction "have yet to make their debut in musicology or music theory" (*Contemplating Music* 17). Criticism, as it is practiced in the other arts, is relegated to the popular and

journalistic in the study of music. Musicology, theory, and to a lesser extent ethnomusicology are in Kerman's terms positivistic, without critique. These disciplines, in their willful ignorance of historical or ideological conditions as well as developments in other disciplines, offer a "validation of a body of treasured musical compositions" (66). That is, in the exclusion of avant-garde art, popular music, music of nonwestern cultures, and the material conditions of production, the academy preserves the divine rule of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century art music and the ethos of patriarchal, imperialist culture that has been opened to debate in most of the other humanities.

In his article surveying the increasing dissent within the music academy, "Theory in Literature, Analysis in Music" (1983), Steven Paul Scher maintains Kerman's position as an important step towards a poststructuralist revamping of musicological and theoretical research. Of interest to Scher is "the parallel [Kerman] draws between musical analysis and the New Criticism that arose in the 1930s. Analysis seems to have emerged as a more intellectually charged critical alternative to positivistic musicology, comprised chiefly of historiography and quasi-scientific scholarly research in music" (53). Scher notes the increasing number of calls for revision of music criticism, but suggests that the few attempts to employ theories from other disciplines have met with mixed success. In his contribution to the MLA's *Interrelations in Literature*,"Literature and Music" (1982),

Scher reveals an understanding of interdisciplinary exchange similar to his predecessors (especially Bertrand Bronson): "Organized sound serves as basic materials for both arts, a shared feature that immediately suggests the idea of comparability. But caution is in order, for the literary sound unit differs substantially from the musical sound unit: the individual word can (and usually does) carry semantic connotations, whereas the individual tone cannot" (230). That is, music and language can only ever be analogous; never can they directly share properties or associations. This conceptual limitation informs many early attempts at developing interdisciplinary theory, and of course, is a variation on the very prejudices that inform conservative musicology and music theory.

Many of the more radical proponents of interdisciplinary study come not surprisingly from outside the musical academy. Edward Said is, in addition to being one of the founders of the study of postcolonial literature, music critic for *The Nation*. In his book *Musical Elaborations*, Said echoes the call for new approaches to the study of music: "there is a putative, or ascribed, fullness to self-sufficient musicological work that is now much less justified than ever before. When even the most hermetic and specialized writers like Joyce or Mallarmé are accessible to ideological or psychoanalytic analysis of a far from crudely reductionist kind, there is no reason to exclude music from similar scrutiny" (xvi). Like Scher and other more conservative

crossdisciplinary theorists, Said asserts a fundamental division between the meaning capacity of music and that of language: "The letters and words of literary texts are of course denotative; they share a common, and overlapping, discursivity with spoken language in ways that, with the exception of rudimentary onomatopoeic mimicry, are very different from the relationship between musical notes and words. Music is not denotative and does not share a common discursivity with language" (40). However, unlike Scher, he defines a non-discursive social space for music. That is, music is an event of social definition -- whether it transgresses or confirms traditional repressive hierarchies. Said maintains music as a language if not a discourse in, for example, his discussion of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century harmonic practice: "a learned, extremely specialized language runs right through that period of almost a century and a half. To call this a police regime of the signifier is, I think, only a little to dramatize the extraordinary extent to which such a language is maintained in place and, conversely, the equally dramatic degree to which it seems to have forbidden, or at least partially prevented, encroachment or serious, perhaps even revolutionary, transformation" (56). Thus, the practice of music enforces and replicates a particular repressive ideology even while it refuses specific discursive content. Clearly, Said is willing to grant a "meaning" function to music, if not a denotative one (though his terms, denotative versus expressive and language versus

discourse, need to be interrogated). Said sees performance as being both the reification of hierarchy, the virtuosity and athleticism of the elite performer contrasted with the passive acceptance of the non-expert audience, and the site for potential disruption. Performance has the virtue of being textually unfixed, in time and fleeting, finally uncontainable. Thus, highlighting the very fact and moment of performance is an act of transgression in itself.

Said's notion of performance of music as potentially transgressive, not fixed in time and space as the conventional conception of text, offers a model for reading the musical performance as a kind of text. The idea of absolute text has a similar history to the idea of absolute music, and critics like Joseph Kerman and Steven Paul Scher have pointed to this parallel when they claim that traditional music theory resembles New Criticism. In his book *Text: the Genealogy of an Antidisciplinary Object*, John Mowitt traces the evolution of the idea of the "text" as discrete object and the attempts to contain it by imposing disciplinary boundaries (in the Foucauldian sense) on it. In much the same way that musical discourses are exempted from social criticism by maintaining the idea of absolute music, text too is limited by disciplinary boundaries. Mowitt sees the work of Ivanka Stoïanova as the most radical 'antidisciplinary' attempt to ally music and language. Like Said, Stoïanova sees the potential for transgression of discipline in the text-as-performance: "gesture is thought to

constitute the musical work because it belongs to the very phenomenological surface of a performance. By the same token, it subverts musical works because gesture is precisely what musicology excludes from consideration in the elaboration of musical meaning" (181). Definitions of music and meaning constitute disciplinary boundaries and those boundaries are social and ideological in origin: "the differences that separate music and literature belong to a sociocultural framework that affects both practices -- a framework that must be considered within analyses that are conducted by either musicologists or literary scholars upon their respective objects" (182). Mowitt claims that under the rubric of text, music assumes a shifting identity (like language) that exceeds disciplinary limitations and overlaps with other objects of study.

Stoïanova conceives of textuality in a Kristevan framework but with a central difference from Kristeva: "'the text and the musical statement transpose energetic charges, pulsional tensions, perceptual ensembles, pluralities as well as totalities, a mass of codified elements at the heart of an individual history inscribed within social life'" (Stoïanova in Mowitt 183). That is, for Kristeva music is allied with the semiotic in its disruption of the symbolic order, but that alliance excludes music from meaning, from social influence and construction. As the semiotic is presymbolic and a-social so is music in Kristeva's terms. Mowitt suggests that Stoïanova takes Kristeva a step further by

including music explicitly in the social domain: the text of music, especially in its performative capacity is still profoundly disruptive but it is also a product of cultural forces and as such inscribed in textual constraints even while it exceeds them.

In Julia Kristeva's conception of the birth of language, the break from the mother and the entry of the subject into Symbolic signification serve to order, name or discipline elemental drives. But that break with the uninterrupted kinetic energy of the Mother is not lost altogether; instead, the subject-in-language reaches back into his or her presymbolic state by breaking conventional, Symbolic signification. In other words, by defying disciplinary boundaries, the subject moves outside language for a moment. It is important to remember, however, that Kristeva's notion of the semiotic is unevenly balanced with the Symbolic. That is, the Symbolic discipline of language inevitably regains control over the nonsense of semiotic expression. As well, the supposed freedom of the semiotic remains in a mythical, presocial and hence ahistorical sphere -- oneness with the Mother. Art, particularly disruptive or avant-garde art, is born in an analogous process. Social ritual enacting destructive taboos, such as killing in ritual sacrifice, serves to reify the law even as it subverts it. Thus, art is defining even as it is disruptive, and the farther away from conventional signification the art form is, the more

disruptive. Music seems, in Kristeva's conception, the most semiotic of art forms, and the most socially transgressive.

Kristeva suggests, in *Revolution in Poetic Language*, that art is (was) born out of the celebration that accompanies ritual sacrifice. Beyond Jane Harrison and beyond Fredrich Nietzsche, however, Kristeva maintains that the sacrifice and its ceremony mime the process by which subjects acquire language. That is, they establish the social containment of the constructive/ destructive drives that power human existence: "sacrifice can be viewed not only as an imposition of social coherence but also as its outer limit. On the other side of that boundary is the a-symbolic, the dissolution of order, the erasing of differences, and finally the disappearance of the human in animality" (76). The sacrifice "confines violence to a single place making it a signifier," (75) and that signifier is structured as "a 'play of images'; the establishment of an ideal community; the introduction of the object of jouissance into the social norm" (75). The sacrifice, like the break between the semiotic and the symbolic, is the birth-place of metaphor, "the reign of substitution, metonymy, and ordered continuity" (77). Yet the same energy of representation that motivates a controlling form also inspires the representation of art which "deploys the expenditure of semiotic violence, breaks through the symbolic border, and tends to dissolve the logical order" (79). Perhaps unknowingly, Kristeva echoes the intuition of Harrison (who echoes Nietzche) in her sense

of the performative origin of Greek art: "The Dionysian festivals in Greece are the most striking example of this deluge of the signifier, which so inundates the symbolic order that it portends the latter's dissolution in a dancing, singing, and poetic animality" (79). The flip side of the energy of social communion, the uniting and directing of drives, is the very instability of that direction and the sense that at any time the music of the semiotic can break free of its controlling syntax.

Psychoanalysis generally has been of increasing interest to some musicologists because it emphasizes the importance of nonsense and latent content, and because it accounts for kinetic, physical response through drive theory. That is, some theorists see music as an essential sensual art form and its meaning must be at least partly accounted for by its physical effect/ affect. Lawrence Kramer proposes a psychoanalytic model for musical meaning. He suggests that music (and he speaks only of tonal music) generates desire through tension and release, dissonance and resolution. As with many of the critical approaches I have discussed, Kramer deals mainly with the moments of disrupted convention, which he claims are examples of uncontainable psychic mimesis: "Wherever the discursive rhythm of a work appears as a breakable surface rather than as a solid foundation, its cathetic subtext takes on the role of an unconscious impulse (more exactly: a train of primary-process thought), though not necessarily the content of one" (*Music and Poetry* 20).

Musical signification for Kramer represents or imitates a dynamic psychic process. For Catherine Clément, in her specifically feminist analysis of nineteenth-century opera, music is inseparable from text and "the music is the unconscious of the text" (21). Opera text is always, for Clément, the spectacle of the victimization of women. Women forever die, go mad or get married to satisfy the patriarchal gaze of the opera spectator, and music functions to connect the viewer to the action, making him or her an unproblematic subject. It appeals to the most basic of kinetic responses, hearing, which ties each of us directly to the prelinguistic comfort of the mother. Thus, music is the unconscious of the text and feeds directly into the listener's unconscious drives, making it more insidious even than the staged spectacle. Though the psychoanalytic paradigm is interesting in its relationship with music, it continues to have uncomfortable associations, as is evident in Kristeva, with the universal and transcendent mother. Music finds its power once again in an unproblematic and transcendent union with the mother who comes before language, culture and is hence without social influence.

In spite of its limitations, psychoanalysis is a potential tool for examining avant-garde poetry which seems to be performative, insofar as its defiance of language conventions is semiotic, or kinetic. When that poetry is set to music it may be possible, using Kristevan psychoanalysis, to propose an exchange between the nonlinguistic semiotics of

the music and the evasion of Symbolic discipline of the language. Stoïanova adds an important element to this potential site of shared signification (or avoidance of signification): musical semiosis and linguistic semiosis both have their origins in the social sphere rather than the mythic and ahistorical sphere of "primitive" ritual and motherhood. Keeping the Kristevan notion of transgression of disciplinary boundaries as a significant and kinetic motility, we can add through Mowitt and Stoïanova the notion that music and language, though mobile and pulsional, are also discursive and textual. That is, they are both culturally produced and received.

At the root of many antidisciplinary studies (Mowitt's included) lies Jacques Attali's *Noise: the Political Economy of Music*, itself descended from the work of Adorno and the Frankfurt school. Attali's main contention is that socio-economic forces deploy and disseminate power through disciplinary classifications, specifically, by designating sound as "music" or "noise." Further, claims Attali, shifting definitions of music and noise are prophetic of large social changes. He, like Kristeva, locates the disciplinary impulse in the social ritualization of violence. That is, Attali sees the containment of noise, by defining music in opposition, as an instance of ritualized murder -- a social challenging of the urge towards violence. The disruptive, antisocial impulse is set off, contained, made unpleasant through social convention and thus is ideology

inscribed on musical practice -- or musical practice built in the image of ideology. Unlike Kristeva, however, Attali suggests that in order to disrupt the political economy of music, and disruption is his goal, the boundaries between noise and music need to be consistently ruptured or displaced without re-establishing themselves.

Absolute music is established, as we have seen, through its definition as an exclusive discipline which admits no dialogue with other disciplines or discourses. Absolute music must also be absent from signification; it cannot refer or represent. In their introduction to *Music and Society*, Susan McClary and Richard Leppert claim that this quality assume by traditional musicology is the most significant barrier to a social criticism of music: "historically, music has been viewed by Western culture by means of an unproblematized paradigm which assumes music's nonrepresentational character as the *sine qua non* from which `l further study proceeds. That is a very different position from which to begin analysis than for most other art forms" (xiii). The collection of essays in *Music and Society* are attempts at a criticism of "musical discourse" in a social context, but the editors stop short of assigning a specific referential meaning to the music discussed in the volume, ascribing semantic associations to "the articulation of social values in specific musical repertories and the function of music in social contexts as a means of transmitting dominant ideology" (xiv). The final hope of the

study is to cross disciplinary boundaries at least within the study of music between musicology and ethnomusicology, to show that western music is just as susceptible to social conditions as the music of any other culture.[6] McClary makes this point in more detail in *Feminine Endings*, one of the very few examples of feminist musicology, as she says in her introduction. Again the issue of reference or meaning is addressed in the attempt to expand disciplinary boundaries: "Meaning is not inherent in music but neither is it in language: both are activities that are kept afloat only because communities of people invest in them, agree collectively that their signs serve as valid currency. Music is always dependent on the conferring of social meaning -- as the ethnomusicologists have long recognized, the study of signification in music cannot be undertaken in isolation from the human contexts that create, transmit and respond to it" (21). For McClary (rather like Said), musical conventions become ideologically loaded, "natural," and disruptions of convention are disruptions of dominant ideologies.

Carolyn Abbate's work approaches a combination of the need for disruption of boundaries between disciplines and discourses and of the need for the theorization of musical signification. In her book *Unsung Voices*, Abbate proposes an apparently dialogic model for signification in opera. She suggests that music signifies in fact *through* disruption of conventional structure and representations, whether narrative, staged or musical. She claims a narrative

function for music, but not narrative in the conventional Wagnerian sense, a music motif representing a staged idea or thing. Instead, music is performed narrative and "a way of speaking, of manipulating time, of using figural language, of constituting events, and the *context of performance* in which narrating occurs" (28). Musical narrative is "a rare and peculiar act" (19) which is set off from the ostensible stage narrative (Abbate deals mainly with opera) and from the surrounding music. It may be a moment of reflexivity[7] or an uncanny sonorous presence (for example instruments sounding as voices) or a singer heard as a character singing by the other characters. Regardless of its manifestation, this narrating moment is fleeting and disruptive. It crosses disciplinary boundaries in performance. The narrating moment crosses the boundary from the stage to the audience, text to music, orchestra to voice; it enacts the instability of cultural codes that govern music and, for that matter, language production. Abbate's work suggests the possibility of a project of avant-garde signification. That is, in works like *Four Saints* or *Façade*, where the experiment with language and disruption of convention is established at the outset, the text may deliberately dialogue with the music inviting that ephemeral signifying voice into the performance. While Abbate's examples are only momentarily disruptive of a relatively coherent organic narrative structure and disciplinary division between text and music, Stein and Thomson's active collaboration (or Sitwell and

Walton's) creates an extended dialogue, or an experiment in transgression of disciplinary boundaries.

In his own alternative to "the dominant discourses of musicology -- positivistic and empirical", John Shepherd too recognizes that "a central issue is . . . how music signifies" (in Solie 48). In the disciplining of sound into music/ noise categories, music has been marginalized, made into a cultural "Other", essentially *because* it is uncontainable. In the social construction of meaning, the visual (associated by Shepherd with masculine power and control) has taken precedence over the audible but in moments of interdisciplinarity, of performance, something of the transgressive nature of sound/ music is released -- and the gap between language and music narrows through sheer indeterminacy:

> 'Music' does not have to be 'homologous' any more than 'language' has to be 'purely arbitrary'. Indeed, the ability of music to go beyond the homologous potentials of sound in constituting itself as a performance event through words, images and movement has its counterpart in the ability of language to go beyond the arbitrary potentials of sound in constituting itself as a performance even through the paralinguistics of rhythm, inflection, image and movement. It is no coincidence that those forms of music and language draw attention to their multimedia constitution and so to the lived, concrete and messy realities they evoke (61).

Shepherd's conception of disciplinarity, music and language is similar to Mowitt's notion of text. The performative element which constitutes the substance of music and language depends on elements of each that are explicitly excluded from disciplinary consideration. Thus, music and language share several positions in their performative, constitutive function.

From the sociologist's point of view, the location of musical meaning is again in contradiction to conventional conditions of meaning operations. In *Music as Social Text*, John Shepherd suggests that the constitution of the industrial world depends on the idea of an observable, quantifiable reality and language is the mode of quantification. Similar to Derrida's notion of "logos" is Shepherd's observation that industrial societies depend on the assumption "that everything that is real can be expressed in objective, rational language" (79). Music, however, is a form of social expression which escapes those categories, and thus a useful analytic approach should dispense "with the troublesome notion of the 'referent' *at the same time* as transcending the 'inner-outer' dichotomy (on which the notion of the 'referent' is ultimately grounded) by understanding that the location of significance in any symbolic discourse is simultaneously 'inside' and 'outside' it" (88). Shepherd argues that a useful analysis of music as social text looks to the "immanence 'in' music of abstracted social structures, and by the articulation of social meanings in individual

musical events" (83). I am not sure that Shepherd really manages to escape the tyranny of inner and outer, but his model begins to offer a justification for interpreting meaning as a process. The associations that musical gestures accrete are indeed abstract, and the process by which the associations are invoked is a conventionally "silent" one: "It is the tactile core of sound, timbre, that reminds us that the gaps and silences between the delineations of structures, whether social, cultural or musical, are not gaps or silences, but directionally charged fields of meaning and experience" (90). Musical meaning appears to be uniquely and inevitably constituted in the act of listening, in the gesture of performance. Shepherd implies that the abstract meanings in music are formed or perceived through timbre, the physicality of music, and that these abstractions are not limited or contained but fluid and dynamic. "Directionally charged fields" suggests a dynamic energy of displacement. The process of meaning is created and immediately dissolved (and recreated) through the act of listening and the timbre directs (and redirects) the listener's desire -- desire becomes process and meaning.

The process of listening differs, in Shepherd's estimation, from the act of looking. Looking is a means to isolate and contain the potentially unruly whereas listening is always victim to the inevitable variability and fluidity of sound.[8] The notion of specularity is closely connected in Shepherd (as in Derrida) with the tyranny of written

language: "All the information required for the creation and transmission of meaning -- as grounded ultimately in the life of spoken language -- is contained within the system of visual signs. Sound -- ephemeral, evanescent, slippery, and challenging -- ceases to be the central presence in language. It is replaced by the safety, permanence, immutability, silence, and isolation of vision" ("Difference and Power in Music" 55) Shepherd implicitly suggests here that the absolute differences established by convention between music and language can be isolated in the cultural move to literacy; that is, vision, not sound, becomes the medium of meaning generation, and thus a 'natural' connection between music and speech is broken and a threat to Western industrial rationalism is eliminated. Virgil Thomson may have held similar beliefs to Shepherd in this regard: " . . . way back in the mind, where music gets born, it has a closer concordance with language and with gesture than it can ever possibly have with the more obscure movements of the viscera or with the states of the soul" (*Musical Scene* 297-98). In fact, as Shepherd goes on to say in another article, "the very fact of music, based as it is on the physical phenomenon of sound, constitutes a serious threat to the visually mediated hegemony of scribal elites" ("Music and Male Hegemony" 157). Like Kristeva, Shepherd maintains a dubious narrative of origin for the connection between music and speech (and hence the potential for meaning and music). Nevertheless, his notion of sound as excess, the

uncontainable threat to rationalism, fits nicely with the traditional problems of musicology: "Sound . . . tells us that there is a world of depth surrounding us, approaching us simultaneously from all directions, totally fluid in its evanescence, a world which is active and continually prodding us for a reaction" (158). Shepherd's ideas suggest a way of locating meaning in music which escapes the rationalist's need for an explicitly referential model of meaning production. Instead, music can be conceived of as a shifting web of possibilities, accretions of associations, directions of desire.

Semiotic theory has provided some musicologists with a tool outside their discipline with which to locate signification in music and thus offer alternatives to the positivist tre[illegible]s of musicology. Though not poststructuralist (and thus fraught with its own positivistic assumptions), semiotic theory is antidisciplinary in a sense because it provides the music scholar with an apparent answer as to how music may signify. As with all semiotic paradigms, however, the attribution of meaning in one form or another is evidence for the universal nature of all products of human culture, not their variability or multivocality. Jean-Jacques Nattiez is one of the leading proponents of musical semiotics and perhaps its most sophisticated advocate.[9] In *Music and Discourse* (incidentally, translated by Carolyn Abbate), he claims that semiotics is not a science of communication but simply a theory of cultural production.

Nattiez goes on to suggest that the sign, including the musical sign, is a dynamic entity which fluctuates between three levels of manifestation and an infinite number of variations in interpretation. He sees signification as a "*spatial* image in which interpretants appear to be caught in a web of multiple interactions"(7). Of the three levels of the sign, only one, the neutral level (the physical 'trace' of the composer's work), is fixed and autonomous. The other two levels, poietic (the composer's intended meaning) and esthetic (the listeners received meaning), are subject to social conditions. Thus, while he admits a significant element of process and social flux into music's signification, Nattiez also retains the supremacy of the written over the performed. Like Attali and others, Nattiez suggests that "the distinction between sound and noise has no stable physical basis, and the way we employ these two terms is culturally conditioned from the outset" (46). He also claims that music is made by the listener and not by the intentions of the composer or the marks on the paper, but while theorists with a poststructuralist bent declare that ethnomusicology should reveal to us the unique social conditions that produce western music and thought about music, Nattiez retains a universalist approach to both Western and non-Western musics. While Nattiez's notion of semiotics goes some way towards providing a theory of signification for music, it stops short of offering a

paradigm for an exchange or dialogue between the discourses of language and the discourses of music.

In his general attempt to open music criticism to poststructuralist theory, Marshall Brown has borrowed from poststructuralist precepts without entering into a clear theoretical paradigm. Brown, in his interdisciplinary studies, takes a poststructuralist understanding of the language of literary criticism and applies it to music criticism: "The special challenge of analyzing a nonverbal medium [...] is to recognize that no special challenge is involved. All explanation is transference or metaphor (nothing much different is meant when certain literary critics contend that all reading is misreading)" ("Mozart and After" 706).[10] Ultimately, Brown, like Abbate, McClary and other critics working to expand the boundaries of cultural criticism, feels that products of culture, whether musical or literary or visual, are in varying degrees indeterminate. Critical language cannot reproduce a work: it can only offer a figure for interpretation. Once language is admitted as being indeterminate, multivocal, subject to semiotic disruptions (choose your critical paradigm), music is only removed from words by a matter of degree, not by an irreducible binary between meaning and nonmeaning.

An Antidisciplinary Act

In looking at *Façade* and *Four Saints*, and to a lesser extent *Between the Acts*, I will engage in what Mowitt terms

an *anti*disciplinary critical act. That is, I see the librettists and the composers as sharing more than simply an analogy of form and meaning. Sitwell's and Stein's innovations in form can be attributed to their attentions to the sensual/ aural (gestural) elements of language. As well, they experiment with indeterminacy, and the loss of clear referentiality points to a shared element of music and language: neither has a fixed point of origin or a concrete objective reality, both are ultimately constituted through performance (whether by reader, player or musician). In order to get at the relationship between the signification of language and that of music (or visual art, or movement), one must examine the way in which articulated events acquire meaning. I am suggesting that signification takes place on a continuum from greater to lesser specificity and that it is bound up in a performative process of displacement, or repetition with difference. This model of signification requires a dynamic and fluid process that dispenses with the absolute dichotomies erected by disciplinary theories. This process of dynamic displacement offers an alternative to notions of substance and spatio-temporal fixity traditionally associated with textual (print) signification.

The gestural continuum I am proposing mediates between the binary notion of signifier/ signified. It finds a way into the process of referral revealing its multidirectionality and its dispersion. This notion of signification as a process and performance, the erasure of a

binary operation of meaning production, is echoed or exemplified in theories of the theatre and music that seek to escape the "logos" and supposed authority of the written text and the dominance of the specular over the aural. That is, text, written word, and spectacle traditionally carry with them an impulse towards containment much like the impulse that separates musical signification from language signification: in order to be quantifiable, an articulation must be isolated, pinned down and clearly demarcated from its surroundings -- in other words, controlled and limited. Ironically, in the notion of music/ text dialogue I propose here, music "means" through an increased awareness of the possibility of reference while language slides closer to music through a disruption of the signified/ signifier binary.

Thus my methodology moves through four distinct phases. (1) The very notion of discipline is, as I have already suggested, a barrier which maintains networks of power relations intact, and which serves to limit a playful dialogue between discourses. But the mechanism through which discipline is maintained, the illusion of a centered binary model of signification, disrupts itself in the very act of signification. (2) Through the process of "play" the signifier is revealed to be empty and excessive at once. The primary distinguishing feature of language over music, its ability to refer, no longer functions in an immutable presence of meaning. (3) The locus for this process which

disrupts discipline through a disruption of signification is the body-in-performance. The kinetic surface of a body in sound and motion removes textual signification from its illusion of separation and permanency and thus provides a site for the exchange of meaning processes. (4) Finally, the body-as-text is the model for a performative identity, which proposes a subject created through a performative juxtaposition of discourse, and that identity is constituted by an interchange of discourse in the same way that the performed event/ identity manifests itself.

The development of discipline, whether penal or academic, represents a subtle dissemination of hierarchical power. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault suggests that a network of observers establishes authority structures through specular control. Individuals seen, separated and measured in comparison with one another and according to an artificial set of normative rules, are individuals controlled. Thus, the student is directed to, and tested in, separate fields of knowledge, and fields of knowledge are themselves created and confined from one another. This demarcation establishes a systemic control over language, representation and movement: "The power of the Norm appears through the disciplines. Is this the new law of modern society? Let us say rather that, since the eighteenth century, it has joined other powers -- the Law, the Word (*Parole*) and the Text, Tradition -- imposing new delimitations upon them" (Foucault 184). Discipline divides one individual subject from another as it

divides one Text from another, and this separation is a direct representation of power. However, this delimitation is not only confining but productive: "The individual is no doubt the fictitious atom of an 'ideological' representation of society; but he is also fabricated by this specific technology of power that I have called 'discipline'. We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it 'excludes', it 'represses', it 'censors', it 'abstracts', it 'masks', it 'conceals'. In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth" (194). Power produces a reality quantifiable and verifiable in language and it separates languages, or discourses, from one another in order to maintain control. It is punitive and generative. However, the power that produces and divides the signifying disciplines of music and language, or divides one discourse from another, is also undermined by their exchange. In the performative model of signification proposed here, the division between discourses, whether in language or music, becomes porous. In performance, discourses become dialogic or collaborative.

The process for textual signification is fluid, dynamic and performative. It is transgressive of the boundaries established by conventional notions of discipline, and when the process of signification is shared between media, that transgression is carried further. As Stoïanova (in Mowitt) suggests, the process by which language and music overlap is

one of excessive and indeterminate articulation: "'the notion of the text designates the functioning of the signifiers/ signifieds recast by one another, that is, the functioning of significance that traverses while dislodging structures, and which scrambles the principles of communicative language. . . . The text's functioning articulates itself as a place of unlimited generation, as a perpetual transgression of resistances, inertias and stagnations'" (Mowitt 182). Stoïanova's object of study, or model of text, is not that of the traditional musicologist. Her musical text, like Nattiez's, is a three-part structure composed of the written text (mediated by the composer's subjectivity and contemporary notions of musicality), the performed event (relying on sonority and the gesture of the performer), and the subjectivity of the listener. The particularly progressive music, the music that is most active, the most frenetic in multiple gesture, is the music that most unsettles the listening subject. That is, Stoïanova's notion of the avant-garde in music is similar to Kristeva's notion of it in poetry: the subject is rendered unstable in the text's articulation. An extreme example of this interpolation/ disruption process lies in the effect of minimalist music on the listening subject. The subject is drawn in by the language of musical identification, tonality, and then gradually disrupted through the minute and progressive changes taking place in the music. Because minimalism has no coercive overriding "narrative" (associated

with traditional sonata-type tonal development), it offers a "heterogeneity of subject positions" (186), though it is not the only musical form to do so. In fact, Stoïanova argues, music conceived as gesture is open to a variety of discursive interpretations: "[Stoïanova's] commitment to the textual paradigm is meant to authorize her insistence upon the interpretive heterogeneity of music when the latter is comprehended as a social apparatus. . . . '[i]f the barrier between gesture and music is razed, the musical work inevitably becomes a multiplicity, a space open to multiple, plurivalent inscriptions'" (186). The music of William Walton and, especially, Virgil Thomson moves towards an experiment in minimalist discourse: they employ an accessible musical language (tonality), and within that language they gesture towards many diverse musical discourses, while refusing to offer a narrative. Thomson and Walton propose models of musical textuality that explicitly make reference to themselves as social constructions, that offer a way "in" for the listening subject, who is then continually frustrated, and that implicate gesture (vocal, physical or discursive) in the process of signification, the generation of meaning.

As Stoïanova suggests, performative dialogue breaks down disciplinary borders between discourses, and in so doing, it questions the stability of signification itself. The shifting from one signifying medium to another is similar to the Derridian notion of "play" in language. In "Structure,

Sign and Play", Jacques Derrida proposes a model of discourse based on the absence of a stable, theological notion of reference. Language itself operates without a central referential anchor; instead of representing reality, it creates reality, and "discourse" is "a system in which the central signified, the original or transcendental signified, is never absolutely present outside a system of differences" (Derrida 280). In signification, the process of reference always takes place in the absence of a central, concrete referee. The signified is always missing something, and yet in repetition, it accretes new things. This process of repetition and difference is, in Derridian parlance, "play" because it is a movement of signifier to signifier which remains ultimately unconfinable. Thus discipline is disrupted or defied at the very level of language even as it is asserted: "One cannot determine the center and exhaust totalization because the sign which replaces the center, which supplements it, taking the center's place in its absence -- this sign is added, occurs as a surplus, as a supplement. The movement of signification adds something, which results in the fact that there is always more, but this addition is a floating one because it comes to perform a vicarious function, to supplement a lack on the part of the signified" (289). Thus, the binary structure of signification, the apparent stability of reference, is displaced by the very movement of reference. If the binary stability of signification is lost in the play of

signification, then explicit reference cannot be the criterion for signification itself. The notion of play, therefore, leaves less clearly articulated modes of expression than language (like gesture or music) open to interpretation as signification. However, since this possibility is also established through semiotic theory, Derridian play suggests that this expanded notion of discursive movement can serve as a model of discursive exchange or dialogue. In this avoidance of structure, the displacement of the signifier can take place from linguistic phrase to musical phrase.

Derrida illustrates the potential for dispersed signification and the need to disrupt the illusion of transcendent meaning in a discussion of Antonin Artaud's theatre of cruelty. In offering an alternative model of text, Derrida proposes a vital and variable mode of signification associated with the stage. The stage, the performance, offers an alternative model of signification to the traditional, textual "logos": "To reconstitute the stage, finally to put on stage and to overthrow the tyranny of the text is thus one and the same gesture" (Derrida 236). Conventional representation also plays into this limiting theology of theatre: traditional theatre offers a vision of "a present that would exist elsewhere and prior to it, a present whose plenitude would be older than it, absent from it, and rightfully capable of doing without it: the being-present-to-itself of the absolute Logos, the living presence

of God" (237). And in this conventional theatre "all the pictorial, musical and even gesticular forms introduced into Western theatre can only, in the best of cases, illustrate, accompany, serve, or decorate a text, a verbal fabric, a logos which *is said* in the beginning" (236). Derrida interprets Artaud as calling for a reentry of the body into theatrical signification, and this emphasis on physicality will serve to undermine or contradict the limitation of representation. The body reclaims signification in this theatre of cruelty not only through physical presence, movement, and music but also through the voice -- the voice inhabits and controls the word:

> How will speech and writing function then? They will once more become gestures: and the logical and discursive intentions which speech ordinarily uses in order to ensure its rational transparency, and in order to purloin its body in the direction of meaning, will be reduced or subordinated. . . . [T]he deconstitution of diaphanousness lays bare the flesh of the word, lays bare the word's sonority, intonation, intensity -- the shout that the articulations of language and logic have not yet entirely frozen, that is, the aspect of oppressed gesture which remains in all speech, the unique and irreplaceable movement which the generalities of concept and repetition have never finished rejecting (240).

Derrida, via Artaud, suggests a recovery of the word from the logos that dominates textuality. The body enacts signification; the word is revealed as a physical, or gestural, process through the act of performance. Stein and Thomson, Sitwell and Walton, and Woolf's Miss LaTrobe are not writers of a theatre of cruelty, however. Their theatre is certainly of the avant-garde, but it does not entirely leave behind the conventions of the traditional theatre. It is contained, to some extent, within the rubric of spectacle. Nevertheless, Stein's and Sitwell's experiments in libretto, and Woolf's/ LaTrobe's in narrative, depart from the theological logos that Derrida sees dominating traditional notions of textuality.

All three writers, to a greater or lesser degree, use language and syntax which escape conventional representation and which use vocal (and musical) gestures to keep the textual experiment centered on itself. In Derrida's reading of Artaud, "repetition is evil" (245): it is the negation of life, a hollow. Representation is repetition (for Derrida) and hence perpetuates the ideology of limited, authoritative language. However, in his notion of play, repetition and difference operate together as the very process of signification; that is, repetition of the signifier highlights the lack in the signified and the signifier's supplementary function. Stein and Sitwell have a similar attitude towards repetition. Stein explains, in "How Writing is Written", that in narratives told and retold "there is no

such thing as repetition. . . . The cinema goes on the same principle: each picture is just infinitesimally different from the one before" (in Scott 494). Thus, through an excess of repetition, Stein reveals the same gestural plenitude that Derrida's Artaud would see in the absence of repetition. Repetition, in word and in Thomson's and Walton's music, invites representation only to exceed or transgress it. The language and the music of this theatre operate in the same way: inviting the audience into an identification with a discourse which should refer to an already existing present (*á la* Derrida), but distorting that discourse in order to reveal its inevitable self-reference. Thus, the social elements of discourses (both musical and linguistic) and the gestural constitution of their signification are brought into play against or with one another.

If music produces an unexpected meaning in its diffuse variability, can written language be found variable, diffuse, and dependent on the senses (the body)? Garrett Stewart offers a model of reading which approaches the issue of the sound continuum from its other side: printed text. Stewart makes a case for the act of even "silent" reading as a physical (aural) act and thereby as fluid and evanescent. He suggests that while language production and assignation of distinct meaning appear to rely on articulated gaps between words, the blank spaces on the page, the act of reading undermines this discipline and opens up a variety of semantic possibilities. Stewart calls this process "transegmental

drift" and describes it as the moment in reading when distinct words share boundaries of sound which invite differing semantic associations.[11] Words share in a continuum of sound which belies the regimented segmentation apparently required for meaning, and this process of overlapping and uncontained multiplication of meaning possibilities coincides with a generally poststructuralist, and specifically Derridian, notion of the indeterminacy of language: transegmental drift is an example of "the metonymic or associational slippage by which a signifier is the mark only of another signifier rather than that of a signified. . . . With its increments plastic and detachable, the constitutive slide of the signifier, its intrinsic deferral of the signified, is exposed and diagnosed in such a crossing of lexical boundaries with rather drastic clarity" (*Reading Voices* 8). The body is the place of inscription of language, even in silent reading, Stewart maintains. And the process of signification in reading, oral or silent, resembles John Shepherd's notion of the process by which music signifies.

Textual acoustics is, in Stewart's view, "a malleable 'signifying' energy" (11) which operates in the relatively undifferentiated realm of desire: "The transegmental drift can thus be read as a cross-lexical homophony that shifts the very lexical boundaries upon which it depends, effecting condensation only by displacement of the gap, operating with all the alogicalities and covert agendas of the unconscious" (30). When script is heard, it becomes part of the sound

continuum. It can be more articulated and confined than music, but this containment is only a matter of degree rather than an opposition of kind (just as, in Attali's or Cage's writings, the notion of "music" is only incrementally different from "noise"). The pun, particularly the unscripted pun, carries multiple and more or less vague associations. While these associations are inevitably produced within a social and historical discursive context, they are free from explicit definition. They operate within a realm of meaning but only by a semi-accessible process of gesture (physical and semantic).

Stewart's theory is dependent in part on Roland Barthes' notions of the voice. Barthes sees the body as the only possible "concrete" referent for either music or language; music and language meet not in explicit representation of an "outer" reality but in the song. The voice constitutes a disruptive border between language and music. The process of interpretation must, in Barthes estimation, focus on the production of music or language, in the "signifying" voice and the act of the listener. Barthes suggests that meaning production in listening is not capable of confinement: "the very dispersion, the *shimmering* of signifiers, [is] ceaselessly restored to a listening which ceaselessly produces new ones from them without ever arresting their meaning" ("Listening" 259). The musical enunciation participates in the production of significance but makes it a process of half-realized association, of borrowings connected

by the energy of displacement. The musical enunciation implies and does not state or articulate: "to pass over articulation without falling into the censorship of desire or the sublimation of the unspeakable -- such a relation can only be called musical. Perhaps a thing is valid only by its metaphoric power; perhaps that is the value of music, then: to be a good metaphor" ("Music, Voice, Language" 269). Like Stewart's conception of textuality, Barthes' notion of voice describes a relationship between enunciation and meaning that is associational, tangential and only half realized. It is driven by the energy of unconscious processes but remains always vaguely accessible.[12]

The model of musical/ textual dialogue that I am developing here obviously borrows from diverse sources. Based on a poststructuralist or deconstructionist view of signification, it also incorporates the physical performance of signification. The play in meaning between music and text takes place in their physical performance which is defined in time and space. In fact, this dialogue is explicitly historical and performative in two ways: it engages in a playful exchange of signifiers, in indeterminacy, and it takes place in the ephemeral time frame of performance. This sort of "text" subverts the discipline which conventionally divides music from written language. While this performance of signification takes place on the body, Barthes' and Stewart's theories, and psychoanalysis in general (see discussion above on Kristeva) would seem to provide a center

for the apparently limitless play of signification. However, the notion of an ahistorical interiority actually blocks the movement of exchange between discourses, and it limits the extent to which that play can be read in its historical, social, economic, and especially gendered contexts. While the body provides an explicitly performative site of slippage between discursive modes, or between media (language and music for example), it is not a whole center for the transmission or interpretation of undifferentiated or undisciplined meaning.

Ivanka Stoïanova's model for musical signification, as has already been discussed, is based on a psychoanalytic description of agency. Similar to some feminist film theory, Stoïanova's ideas of musical signification involve the discursive construction of the subject, or rather interpolation of the subject, in the process of performance: "by stressing the notion of a cinematic inscription within or upon music, Stoïanova draws out the idea that music meaning is constructed within a heterogeneous cultural field where materials that we might not immediately associate with 'music' in fact operate within our experience of music apparatus" (Mowitt 186-187). The heterogeneity of musical expressions and associations activate a multiple number of subject positions for the listener: "even as we are positioned as the competent listener for a specific piece of music, we encounter in this process what might be termed a microhistory of positions -- a history comprised of the other

inscriptions (visual or kinetic association etc) that function to make the piece 'mean' for us" (187). Mowitt critiques Stoïanova's position for its avoidance of an antidisciplinary method. While admitting it to be interdisciplinary, Mowitt suggests that "to speak of a theatrical or cinematic inscription within music does not, in and of itself, address the question of the different disciplinary systems that may be informing one another in our experience of a piece of music" (187). In his analysis of the relation between the image-track and the sound-track of Eisenstein's and Prokofiev's *Alexander Nevsky*, Mowitt maintains that in this collaboration, even though it appears to be based on a philosophy of disciplinary exchange, the music is ultimately subordinated to the image. Rather than operating in a dialectic (as in Eisenstein's theory of image construction) with the image-track, the sound-track becomes a translation of the image. An antidisciplinary dialogue requires that musical positions be "permitted to circulate and contend with those constituted by the image" (213).

Conflict between discourses operates then as the primary means of exchange or dialogue. Rather than translating from one medium to another, discourses must be revealed to be mutually performative and interpretive. This model of antidisciplinarity is similar to Judith Butler's model of gender-as-performance, and this similarity invites an image of the subject enabling that subject to be opened to historical and ideological critique. As well, Butler's ideas

allow for a rereading of parody as a device of social critique. While Mowitt and Stoïanova offer a subject interpolated into subject positions through the act of listening, Butler suggests that the subject is constructed by its manipulation of discourse. That is, the body is a site for the performance of discourses, which Butler defines as "historically specific organizations of language" (145). The subject is neither solely controlled by dominant discourses nor is it to be truly located in some pre-linguistic integrity: "The subject is not *determined* by the rules through which it is generated because signification is *not a founding act, but rather a regulated process of repetition* that both conceals and enforces its rules precisely through the production of substantializing effects. In a sense, all signification takes place within the orbit of the compulsion to repeat; 'agency,' then, is to be located within the possibility of a variation on that repetition" (145).[13] The subversion of gender discipline is possible through the signifying process of repetition. The disciplinary discourses that define gender identity are repeated to establish a norm, but effective repetition inevitably fails and these small failures reveal the artificial (i.e. discursive) nature of gender: "it is only *within* the practices of repetitive signifying that [illegible] version of identity becomes possible" (145). Thus, parody constitutes the primary means of gender, or discursive, subversion: "The parodic repetition of gender exposes as well the illusion of

gender identity as an intractable depth and inner substance. As the effects of a subtle and politically enforced performativity, gender is an 'act,' as it were, that is open to splitting, self-parody, self-criticism, and those hyperbolic exhibitions of 'the natural' that, in their every exaggeration, reveal its fundamentally phantasmatic status" (147). Gender identity in Butler's theory is a performative constellation of discourses, and since perfect repetition is impossible these constellations are constantly undergoing revision. As a repetition becomes more excessive, as it exceeds its disciplinary boundaries, it draws attention to the act of gender construction itself. By extension, any collection of performative discourses is a variable and conflicting association of cultural fragments. Repetition of social structures reveals their construction under cultural and historical restraints, and it reveals their potential for subversion.

Butler's model of identity as performative is useful to my project in several ways. Primarily it offers a conception of signification which assumes a Derridian play at the level of discourse; that is, Butler's model assumes no narrative of origin, or transcendental signified, for discursive constructions of identity. Discourses can be fragmented and juxtaposed on the surface of a body, thereby rendering identity and signification performative, taking place in time and space. As well, signification is a movement of repetition and variation: discourses are always

rearticulated. That is, fragments of cultural expression are taken from one social manifestation (often assumed to be unified and disciplined) and parodied or juxtaposed with other derivative social discourses. In this movement, discourse not only generates identity, and a fluid textuality, but also reveals both identity and discourse to be constructed and unnatural. In the works by Sitwell, Stein and Woolf that I will be looking at, the model for narrative or poetic form engages in a similar project of self-creation and self-reference through the employment and juxtaposition of a variety of social discourses. Further, discourse is revealed to be performative in this function through the dialogue between music and words. If identity is created in discourse, so is character and by extension, narrative. In performance, the dynamic of that creation is emphasized by the overlap of apparently divergent modes of expression. In the performing subject, gesture combines with vocal timbre and costume, as well as with dialogue, to reinforce or unsettle gender identity. In the staged performance, the discourses of movement, voice, setting, costume, dialogue and music, are combined to reinforce or unsettle unified notions of textual signification. In *Façade*, *Four Saints in Three Acts* and *Between the Acts*, the construction of character closely resembles Butler's notion of subjectivity, and in all these works, character, or images of identity, indicate the equally variable construction of text.

Disciplines are established to the exclusion of one another, and these barriers maintain control over a potentially disruptive exchange. The disruption of the binary opposition assumed in the act of signification makes inevitable the circulation and especially the repetition of signifiers without relation to a "transcendental" signified. The body in performance (whether in avant-garde theatre, in reading or in song) provides a model of transgressive signification; a physical/temporal space for the dissemination and disruption of discursive discipline. In this new "textuality," the repetition-with-difference of discourse simultaneously constructs and reveals as unnatural the subjective identity and the cultural production. The disruption of discipline through performance entails, or is enabled by, disruption of ideological certainties. Thus, in this study not only gender construction but also constructions of racial, social or political identities are subject to critique. In fact, the very notion of authority in all its forms is opened to differing and dissenting interpretations.

The issue of collaboration fits into this model of signification simply through the addition of differing interpretive dialogues. In *Façade* and *Four Saints in Three Acts*, the work of the writers with the composers provides a clear contrast in discourse even as each offers a support to the expression of the other. In *Between the Acts*, the notion of unified subjectivity/authority is undermined with a

dialogic method of composition. The more conflicting dialogues, discourses, and subjectivities in the narrative, the more fragmented and variable it becomes. In their book on collaboration Andrea Lusford and Lisa Ede propose two alternative models for the collaborative project: the dialogic and the hierarchical. Though they do not suggest that these models are mutually exclusive or in binary opposition, they do privilege the dialogic as being productive of a fluid exchange of discourses, ideas and roles. The participants in such projects generally "value the creative tension inherent in multivoiced and multivalent ventures" (133). This dialogic method allows for contradictions and conflicts between positions, as well as an interdisciplinary approach to the material, but the contradictions need to be valued and celebrated if authority is not to be a unitary act of power: "in a transformed context, collaborative writing and the pragmatic necessity to use it well will tend, we believe, necessarily to foreground issues of power, ideology and difference" (138). Since the collaborative relationships under discussion in this project are specifically interdisciplinary, these texts inevitably invite a comparison of composer and writer as well as modes of expression. In Woolf's novel, the notion of collaboration is invited by the disruption of conventional narrative authority. Regardless of the media, these works invite a critique of disciplinary boundaries, by means of a dialogic collaboration, that crosses over into an ideological critique

and questions the power relations implicit in diverse form of representation and exchange.

Chapter Two: Three Writers Born in Separate Places: Sitwell, Stein and Woolf

> Edith Sitwell says that she's [Gertrude Stein] gigantic (meaning not the flesh but the spirit). For my own part I wish we could skip a generation -- skip Edith and Gertrude and Tom and Joyce and Virginia and come out in the open again, when everything has been restarted, and runs full tilt, instead of trickling and teasing in this irritating way.
>
> Virginia Woolf in a letter to Roger Fry (*Letters* 3: 209)

The critical reception of Gertrude Stein and Virginia Woolf has been, in the last two decades, increasingly prolific and poststructuralist. Edith Sitwell, on the other hand, has been significantly neglected. The criticism of Woolf and Stein shares some striking similarities which serve to build a foundation for my argument. These writers share primarily a musical attitude towards language (though "musical" has a variety of problematic associations for many of their critics). That is, Stein and Woolf focus on sound and rhythm. As well, they disrupt the apparently transparent signification of language through repetition and fragmentation of discourse. This "play" with the process of signification is linked in their work with a disruption both of conventional authority and of monologic generic conventions. These writers emphasize dialogue, and the circulation of conflicting discourses. The gaps, breaks and repetitions are also linked in the criticism with the critique of conventional gender representation in language. What little criticism that exists of Edith Sitwell's work

suggests the possibility for a similar approach. The language of her poems also engages in a playful deconstruction or defamiliarization of conventional language through repetition, especially of aural structures, and fragmentation of conventional, even clichéd, discourses. Thus, even in isolation from their explicit collaborations, these writers engage in similar projects with their genres and languages. And these experiments lead easily into a dialogue with their musical counterparts (or silent companions, as in *Between the Acts*).

Edith Sitwell's only clearly acknowledged influences are the symbolist poets and Gertrude Stein. Her criticism of Stein (whose work, Sitwell believed, was also influenced by symbolist poetry) constitutes an interesting interpretation of Stein's work as well as an implicit program for Sitwell's own experiments. In her *Aspects of Modern Poetry* (1934), Sitwell makes clear the importance, for poets, of innovations in prose from James Joyce and from Gertrude Stein, attributing to the latter an "anarchic breaking up and rebuilding of sleepy families of words and phrases" (215). In the earlier *Poetry and Criticism* (1925) she makes this same assessment of Stein's work and augments it by suggesting that Stein's process is not completely anarchic but is creative of a new formal play or movement: "When we read her first we are unaware of the rebuilding process; we only notice the general breaking down of that to which we are accustomed" (23). Thus the process of reading Stein, in

Sitwell's interpretation, is a dynamic one where the disruption of fixed patterns of expression not only renders cliché and convention ambivalent but fragments them and juxtaposes those fragments with one another.

Sitwell perceived in Stein an understanding of the aural nature of language, language as a material for construction rather than a transparent vehicle for the transmission of meaning. That is, Sitwell sees herself sharing with Stein a preoccupation with language over transparent representation. Sitwell complains in *Aspects* about the intellectual complexity of modern poets whose work neglects the demands of its own material: "occupied with implicit meanings which have their own value but are unrelated to the necessities of poetry . . . [they] distract us with their little broken miniature mirrors of a thousand different worlds, all completely unrelated" (234). Though, as critics have pointed out, Sitwell has a tendency to simplify and make concrete difficult and indeterminate texts and references, she also places emphasis squarely on the sounds and rhythms of words. Of Stein's "The Portrait of Constant Fletcher" Sitwell says, "it is the pattern, the rhythm, and the texture of the passage that is important, and through them, the strange atmosphere that is evoked, and not the story, not the actual facts" (*Aspects* 221). Like Stein, Sitwell lays claim to an abstract or cubist art in poetry, one in which the materials and processes of construction are highlighted. The art takes as its subject its own process of production, and language is

opaque, not engaging in a transparent transmission of meaning.

Sitwell does, nevertheless, have a tendency to make claims that this poetry concerned with language, rather than mimesis, is in fact supermimetic, that it can describe "heat as it really is, shadow as it really is" (*Aspects* 223). This positivism, I would argue, is actually representative of her own evasiveness. Her emphasis on sound as concrete sign echoes her reluctance to talk about her own work in its multiple, ambivalent and disturbing dimensions of meaning, preferring as she does to focus on the very specific technical aspects of her own writing. Sitwell turns the focus in a specific poem to a discussion of, for example, the dust-like qualities of the consonants, rather than the interpretative possibilities of the words. This focus leads to lengthy discussions of the concrete associations invoked by specific sounds, associations which are unprovable (and thus, presumably, indisputable). As the introduction to her early unpublished work (by the editors Gerald Morton and Karen Helgeson) points out, Sitwell shares strategies of evasion with other women writers of her time (and since). This evasion, the editors argue, persists past her critical writing into her poetry and indicates a reticence born of deep insecurity, though it also constitutes a fruitful poetic strategy.

The little criticism on Sitwell's work centers, not surprisingly, on her relationship with Stein. There are

those critics, such as Marjorie Perloff, who wish to maintain Sitwell's exclusion from the modernist canon of experimental writers and those, such as Cyrena Pondrom, who want to expand understanding of both varieties of experimentation. Perloff takes as her model for criticism Sitwell's "Jodelling Song" which claims its source as Stein's "Accents in Alsace". In Perloff's reading, Sitwell's poem is an inferior reworking of Stein's: "Edith Sitwell evidently believed that she was writing in the Gertrude Stein manner" (*Poetics of Indeterminacy* 79). Perloff points out Sitwell's interest in the symbolist poets and her interest in this similar influence on Stein, revealed in Sitwell's introduction to a translation of Rimbaud's *Illuminations* published in 1932. Sitwell claims an affinity between herself and Stein, obliquely at any rate, in their attitude towards language: "Oddly, this aesthetic does not prevent Edith Sitwell from trying to naturalize Gertrude Stein's fluid meanings, to 'make sense' of Stein's poems and fiction" (*PI* 82). Perloff's reading of "Accents in Alsace" emphasizes the poem's playful indeterminacy and richness of association while her attention to "Jodelling Song" leads her to the conclusion that it is merely derivative of Stein's work and the clichéd images that mean "the Alps." Further, Perloff argues, the rigid structure of Sitwell's poem limits its creative possibilities: "The difference between 'Jodelling Song' and 'Accents in Alsace' is thus a difference between a text that limits its mobility by following a fixed set of

rules, guaranteed to produce 'clever' results (rather like a board game), and one that allows for free play, constructing a way of happening rather than an account of what has happened, a way of looking rather than a description of how things look" (85). Perloff applauds Stein's emphasis on the free play of signification, in Derridian terms, while excluding Sitwell from that particular innovation. However, the apparent rigidity of form in this poem as in most of Sitwell's other work in *Façade* is in fact highly ironic -- the cliché invoked to exceed itself, convention turned on itself.

Perloff's championing of Stein oversimplifies the relationship between her and Sitwell, and the connection between their work. As Cyrena Pondrom suggests, they both share a set of influences which operate in different ways in their work. As well, Sitwell's dedication of "Jodelling Song" to Stein was, historically, Sitwell's attempt to show support for a little known avant-garde writer (Stein). Rather than being historically derivative, "Jodelling Song" is an original tribute to Stein's work. The impulse to denigrate Sitwell and champion Stein is, Pondrom argues, an attempt to keep the canon exclusive and elite along fundamentally traditional lines. Pondrom points to similar plays with multiple word meanings and grammatical shiftiness (ambiguous parts of speech) in the work of both writers and suggests that the apparent rigidity of "Jodelling Song" is analogous to a dream narrative where "coherent meaning may be

achieved only if we presume a hidden story, of which we see only interrupted surfaces, deformed and displaced as in the dream-work" (215). This notion, that Sitwell uses conventional images and structures only to disrupt them as a dream would, is also important in relation to Sitwell's own discussion of the uses of rhythm, as an element of the dream world. Perloff's assertion that "Jodelling Song" is limited in structure and diversity of meaning is, to Pondrom, "an unwarranted narrowing of the poem's possibilities" (215). Sitwell's textual relationship to Stein is then, in Pondrom's estimation, a fluid one: "the alterations of conventional linguistic and narrative practices which Sitwell admired in Stein take their place in her own poetry in a field in which they are modified by her adaptation of Rimbauldian principles of deliberate 'derangement of the sense' and her clearly stated hostility to the surrealists' aesthetics of chance" (Pondrom 216). Sitwell emphasizes conventional forms in her work precisely to highlight the juxtaposition between the expectations invited by those formal structures and their disappointment. Thus while Stein *breaks down* those sleepy families of words, Sitwell narrates their other worlds, their dream-work. She deploys and disappoints the expectations of conventional discourses.

Gertrude Stein offered a theory of her own writing processes which coincide with some of Sitwell's assessment, though Stein was much more detailed and specific. Stein recognizes her own "deconstructive" (breaking down sleepy

families) project and zeros in on her theatre as specifically representative of the anti-logocentric aim of her writing. In writing about her own work and attitudes towards language, Stein establishes repetition and variation as the substance of her theatrical technique. In fact, Stein's theatre evades conventions of cause/ effect narrative that presume to represent an already absent "truth," and in so doing the drama loses any sense of linear narrative or distinct character. In "How Writing is Written" Gertrude Stein discusses the failure of nineteenth-century style narrative in the twentieth-century, and she claims that "the better the play the more static" (in Scott 495). Within Stein's static model of theatre, difference is manipulated not to propel narrative or shape character but to foreground the process of performance. The paradox of Stein's theatre is its containment of process within repetition: the changing context redefines the landscape of each element of the text or of the performance. Stein explains in "How Writing is Written" that in narratives told and retold "there is no such thing as repetition". *Four Saints in Three Acts* represents the collapse of difference in repetition. It offers a view of identity and dramatic action which exists in continuous present. Stein characterizes her landscape in "A Transatlantic Interview" with "the idea that in composition one thing was as important as another thing" (in Scott 502). In describing her inspiration for the libretto of *Four Saints*, Stein suggests that the incremental differences in

repetition undermine the stability of binary concepts of signification:

> While I was writing *Four Saints* I wanted one always does want the saints to be actually saints before them as well as inside them, I had to see them as well as feel them. As it happened there is on the Boulevard Raspail a place where they make photographs that have always held my attention. They take a photograph of a young girl dressed in the costume of her ordinary life and little by little in successive photographs they change it into a nun. These photographs are small and the thing takes four or five changes but at the end it is a nun and this is done for the family when the nun is dead and in memoriam ("Plays" *Lectures in America* 80).

This notion of change in repetition offers an interpretation of representation which is static but also carries a dynamic charge -- it enacts a continual displacement of its subject. Each repetition of the picture, and of the words in the passage ("nun" for example), carries a small difference, and its removal from the reality of either the girl or the nun frees the signifier from its relationship to a stable signified. Instead, each signifier is in a dynamic relationship with a number of others.

The oscillation between absence and presence, the displacement of signification, characterizes any representation, even the most stable: "it may look excited a landscape does sometimes look excited but its quality is that

a landscape if it ever did go away would have to go away to stay" (81). In order to go away, the landscape would have to stay away, but it also stays even when it has gone. In order for landscape to be re-presented it is necessarily gone and always already there/ here. In the idea of landscape lurks the hopelessness of any attempt by the playwright to represent an absent elsewhere, and it is this process of displacement within the set scenario that creates the "excitement," the dynamism of landscape. The process of presentation in performance is a transformation (maybe a condensation -- a change of state): "People write me that they are having a good time while the opera [*Four Saints*] is going on a thing which they say does not very often happen to them at the theatre" (81). Thus, the very *process* of the theatre (exemplified by the use of present participles) is also a "thing" which "happens". Performance is simultaneously "thing" and "happening."

Jane Bowers in her book '*They Watch Me as They Watch This*' says that "Stein's prose seems close to music exactly because its words are non-referential and because it is organized around sound rather than sense" (48). She goes on to argue that this very lack of representation or referentiality, which aspires to the condition of music, is a language practice which can only be seen as a process: "we are meant to see the writing and the performance as simultaneous acts" ("The Writer in the Theatre" 217). That is, the only reference the text can make is to itself: "the

only process of which a play can be the natural utterance is the process of composition[;] . . . all other mimeses are false representations" ('*They Watch*' 61). For Bowers, the textual experience is a performative experience and the text is only *self*-reflexive. In his book *Disjunctive Poetics*, Peter Quartermain also argues that Stein's work avoids representation, and he sees this avoidance as an anti-logocentric move. Though he does not claim for it a mystical "musicality," Quartermain does suggest that the disruption of sense is anti-authoritarian; that is, the difficulty of Stein's work undermines the supposed rational, inevitable authority of language: "Stein's writing perpetually destabilizes itself . . . by foregrounding linguistic (as opposed to referential) concerns" (21). Stein takes conventional forms of writing (for example, the list) and introduces radical disjunctions into them, pointing to the artificial nature of the form and jarring the reader's complacency: "in rendering inaccessible to the reader the customary contract with the author as authority, [the text] undermines the reader's sense of his/her own certainty as arbiter of the meaning of the text" (23). Alison Rieke (*The Senses of Nonsense*) offers a contrasting interpretation of the "incomprehensible" nature of modernist experimental writing: "The experimental nonsense of Modernism is privileged, enigmatic speech, and thus it continues the tradition of nonsense in literary writing. It privileges itself by exploiting to the maximum devices of language

causing it to mean more rather than less. These experiments also demand to be read at the same time that they willfully refuse to disclose particular fixed meanings. They are also privileged by possessing hidden sense. However, concealed knowledge and enigmatic form give sanction to and overturn the role of privileged interpretation" (19). In Stein's writing specifically, Rieke suggests that the very plenitude of multiple meaning makes interpretation impossible: "the outcome of excessive plurality and polysemy is semantic emptiness" (69). As opposed to Bowers' interpretation of Stein, Rieke's relies on "sonic likeness" to cue the reader to the process of enigmatic "displacements" that Stein builds into her texts. That is, Stein offers a guide to alternative semantic associations by using similarities in sound over the explicit mode of representation.

The aural quality of Stein's writing which initiates the movement of displacement through associative leaps is underlined by the use of repetition and its invitation to difference. In *The Poetics of Indeterminacy*, Marjorie Perloff has pointed out that it is the notion of repetition and difference which gives Stein her deconstructive, or unmeaning, edge. As many Stein critics have done, Perloff compares Stein's technique of characterization in *Three Lives* to the work of someone like Picasso: "Each repetition . . . fragments our sense of the particular person just as a cubist painting decomposes a given image, accommodating contradictory 'readings' of its subject" (95). Repetition is

at its best when the word carries multiple, subtle associations; that is, "the best words, from Stein's perspective, are those whose meanings remain equivocal and hence able to take on slightly different shading at each reappearance" (*Poetic License* 151). Perloff suggests that Stein's attitude towards narrative also has it roots in cubist technique since "her urge is to minimize temporal distinctions, to present us with a spatial figure, a synchronicity, analogous to the flat or planar landscape of a Cézanne or Picasso" (*Poetic License* 147). That is, in landscape Stein creates a spatialization of narrative; she emphasizes the 'continuous present' (149) of performance through the avoidance of conventional narrative ("temporal") tools. Perloff maintains, in *Poetic License*, that while Stein's texts are indeterminate, they are not meaningless; instead, they offer many diverse possibilities for meaning (153).

Repetition and difference in Stein's work also serve to undermine fixed notions of reference since repeated words seem to refer to one another, not to an outside reality; moreover, every repetition is different. In his article "The Artist's Model" Henry Sayre suggests that "composition is the site of difference" in Stein's work. Sayre notes that an important way to "undermine the referential certainty of language. . . . is to recognize that anything *in the repetition of itself* necessarily changes" (24). Stein's repetitions point to the inevitably differing and deferring

quality of the linguistic act. Repetition is the performance of difference. It is a dynamic series of dissociations from itself even while it calls on similar associations time after time. However, as Stein herself wrote in "A Transatlantic Interview", "Any human being putting down words had to make sense of them" (in Scott 504). Thus, Stein's word play never evades meaning altogether. Instead, it sets in motion a web of associations, an interactive process of multiple voices. As Peter Nicholls points out in "Difference Spreading", Stein's description is not representational but "produced by associative contexts" (118). Nicholls goes on to say that the "process of the text does not abolish the referent so much as enact the suspension of its materiality" (121). In the theatre, Stein's language as process is underlined by performance.

The audience hears the puns, its expectation is thwarted by the repetitions, and the semantic vagaries increase in importance as they are accompanied by the music. In a 1990 article, Dinnah Pladott suggests that the avoidance of referential meaning anticipates theoretical developments of such poststructuralist thinkers as Jacques Derrida or Michel Foucault, especially in its ideological implications. Stein's theatre "questions all imperial and imperialist attempts to represent 'things as they are' in the fictive work of art or in the discourse of ideas" ("Gertrude Stein" 117). In an earlier article, Pladott linked this loss of representation with the addition of music to a text; that is,

this addition allies that text with music's nonreferential and vaguely emotive qualities. This alliance makes meaning and structure less determinate, while placing the emphasis on the performed event, rather than whatever it may try to represent ("The Semiotics of Post-Modern Theatre"). This assessment of the function of music in Stein's theatre depends on the notion, mistaken in my view, of music as an abstract nonreferential art. On the other hand, Marianne DeKoven's view of the music and staging in *Four Saints* is that they "help" the reader to "invent" the text rather than dominate it by "suggesting clarifying, embodying the dimensions of those noisy, teeming 'silences'" (*A Different Language* 142). The non-referential nature of Stein's text, in DeKoven's view, enacts the pre-symbolic state of *jouissance* proposed by Kristeva. But the text is not completely senseless: "Accessible meaning is vital to Stein's experimental work, but referential content is not" (12). Thus, DeKoven suggests that Stein retains meaning, but it is dispersed and uncontained, and that the music has a subordinate relation to the language, clarifying and consolidating meaning. For a critique of DeKoven's point of view, see Harriett Chessman's book *The Public Is Invited to Dance: Representation, The Body, and Dialogue in Gertrude Stein*. In it Chessman opposes the notion of Stein's poetry as semiotic babble on the grounds that it is an essentialist theory which depends on an idea, a mythic (hence a-historical) narrative of origins (4). Instead, Chessman

suggests that "[t]he utopian dimension of Stein's project lies in her creation of a literary language that invites our imaginative sense-making efforts as readers even as it successfully resists our desire to master this language's meaning or to proclaim the language unreadable" (15).

Virginia Woolf's experiments with narrative, though never so extreme, share similarities with Stein's. As some critics have noted, Woolf was interested, like Stein, in the work of the cubists and had access to that artistic movement through her friend Roger Fry. With or without the cubist influence, Woolf's narrative language focuses on the destruction and recombination of discourse, and she professed herself to be interested in a rhythmic model of narrative, rather than a systematic and linear one. That is, repetition and fragmentation, whether of words, structures or images, punctuates her prose. Though a good deal more accessible than Stein's, Woolf's prose maintains a constant revision of narrative convention. A number of critics have gestured to Woolf's interest in painting as a possible intertextual source in *Between the Acts*. Allen McLaurin has suggested that since Woolf was working on *Between the Acts* in the "intervals" of her work on the Roger Fry biography, she may have incorporated elements of his conception of art into that novel. David McWhirter suggests that she would have had little time for Fry's notion of "pure form", which was detached and historically disinterested, but Jack Stewart points to Fry's interest in new innovations in painting from

the continent, particularly in the experiments in cubism. Stewart documents the connections between the painters in the Bloomsbury group and the work of Picasso (65). Like Stein and, indirectly, Sitwell, Woolf was apparently motivated by her exposure to cubist art to reform the shape of representation in the novel: "the very fact of drudging at her biography of Fry drove Woolf to seek freedom in the fragmented form of her last novel, *Between the Acts*" (66). Stewart proposes a dialectic model for the effect of cubism: the work of art consists of juxtaposed binaries, thesis and antithesis, which result in synthesis. Though he admits that *Between the Acts* is "less a vision of oneness than an ironic vision of multiplicity" (86), Stewart opts for the dialectic model and not, as McWhirter does, the dialogic model.

Nevertheless, Stewart outlines some productive parallels between the work of the cubists and Woolf's experimental novel. He offers a reading of cubism which, like Robert Rosenblum, privileges that movement's disruption of the conventions of visual representation: "virtual space is exploded into interlocking segments co-extensive with the flat surface of the canvas, and the distinction between figure and ground, front and back, dissolves along with the illusion of recessional depth. Separate facets of an object . . . are now 'cut out' and recombined to give a jagged, distorted, but intensified image of reality. Picasso called his painting 'a sum of destructions'" (67). *Between the Acts* is not an explicitly cubist novel to the same degree as

Stein's work, of which *Four Saints* is an example, but it does share a similar sense of two-dimensional fragmentation even while it maintains some conventional narrative coherence. The edges between fragments of the cubist painting or collage are emphasized in the juxtaposition of those images just as gaps in the narrative structure of the novel are highlighted by the juxtaposition of "images and scenes [which] . . . fit edge to edge in a mosaic pattern" (69). The energy of this dialectic forces the audience into their performative role: "As with the disjunctions of planes in Cubism, gaps in narrative structure put more pressure on the reader to participate in the formative process" (69). The narrative structure presents a dynamic mode of representation by mixing scenic fragmentation with temporal discontinuity:

> By interspersing pageant and 'reality,' and cutting the novel into thirty-six unnumbered sections, Woolf avoids linear continuity. Although she seldom departs from sequentiality, she does create tension or ambiguity between temporal dimensions: th accelerated procession of historical scenes, with its artificial continuity, intersects with the narrative present, where space often overwhelms time as duration slows to a standstill (70).

Woolf uses this fragmentation in process to offer a reading of subjectivity or character as multiple and divided, unstable, and of "the life of the mind" as transitional (73). That is, the dynamic of Woolf's representation in part reflects a notion of fluid transference or transition between

modes of expression, "between planes and between people" (73).

Music is proposed by Stewart, and by Woolf, as a relation between the fragmented subjectivities of the audience. Music is "the symbol of a conceivable harmony" (Stewart 81) which unites a shattered group. But it also constitutes another element in the fragmentary cubist method: "Miss La Trobe suddenly changes the music of the pageant from nursery-rhyme to jazz, an equivalent of Cubist rhythms. . . . The antics of language . . . draw attention to a new stylistics of dissonance" (Stewart 80). In this scene (*BA* 133), the narrative introduces disjunctions into its flow through rhyme, assonance, alliteration, punctuation, and "[t]his verbal enactment of shattered vision precedes the visual break-up of the self into multiple mirror images" (Stewart 80).

Woolf's novel is also intent on a disruption of, as Pladott characterized it in Stein's work, the imperialism of language. Several critics have noted Woolf's parallels between authorship and authority. *Between the Acts* deals with German fascism and elements of British culture, like patriarchy and imperialism, that share an ideology of domination with fascism (this critique is extended in her work *Three Guineas*). As Patricia Joplin points out, it is the control over the word that defines a dictator. Thus, the explicit disruption of meaning-functions is linked to a deconstruction of the nature of political authority: "In both

theme and structure, Woolf's last work becomes a meditation on the proximity of artist to dictator -- of author to authoritarian ruler -- when language is used as if there were no gap between sound and meaning, sign and referent" (Joplin 89). Like Judith Johnston, Joplin suggests that Miss La Trobe embodies both the authoritarian who claims ownership over language and meaning and the disruptive anti-fascist when she opens her play to celebrate "the intrusion of nature's wild and uncontrollable whims to counter the fixity of social behaviour" (90). Joplin argues that while she disrupts monologic authority and language, Woolf suggests an alternative unification which is characterized by "community and communication, dialogue rather than monologue" (98). There exists, in Joplin's reading of the novel, the possibility for an "authentic" community as opposed to the ideological violence of an unthinking mob, unified behind fascism, patriotism, imperialism, or patriarchy. Thus, the work of art functions not as a fixed text with a fixed meaning but as catalyst: "But in order for art to function as both process and performance, as both metaphor and metamorphosis, it must violate the conventions which have made it possible for people no longer to feel threatened by great art's power to estrange them from their daily lives" (98). The process of this defamiliarization is similar in *Between the Acts* to the process of performance in *Façade*: conventional modes of expression are first established and then disrupted through parody, fragmentation, or

recombination. Thus, words are loosened from a one-to-one correspondence with reality, and meaning is revealed to be dynamic, transformative and performative.

In Woolf's novel, words are represented as threatening. As well, narrative coherence is both represented (with the pageant) and presented as impossible, and the notion of language as an explicit process of reference is questioned. The representation of linear logic is contrasted, and possibly, disrupted by a looser conception of meaning as associational. Most of the critics who deal with Woolf's formal experiment take their cue from J. Hillis Miller's analysis of *Between the Acts* in *Fiction and Repetition* (1982). Miller suggests that Woolf's novel is interested in the repetition of historical narratives and the ways in which each repetition is a reinterpretation; as well, it "dramatizes not so much the problem of interpreting a repetitive sequence which already exists as the problem of adding new elements to such a sequence and so keeping the human story from disintegrating into unconnected fragments" (203). Though Miller is, as is clear from this quotation, concerned with maintaining a reading of Woolf as essentially coherent, he does address the schisms that exist in her narrative. The novel is both mimetic in the conventional sense and highly self-reflexive: "A given passage functions as the fictional representation of a reality that fiction speaks of as lying outside itself and as being only named by its language. At the same time, the passage calls attention

to itself as part of a design of words which generates its own intrinsic meaning" (204-5). Miller suggests that the novel is like a Möbius strip in which its construction is opposed to its transparency of representation. He emphasizes that, though experimental in form, the narrative is primarily chronological, but that within that linear order "Woolf recognizes a contrary intention, the attempt to create an intrinsic, musical, architectural form" (209). The inconsistencies and gaps which make up the rhythm of this quasi-musical form question the process of representation: "The gaps are not between the words at all but within them, for example in alternations between possible literal meanings and possible figurative meanings, between straight or ironic senses, of a given word" (216). When Woolf uses a word, she invokes a multiple and conflicting set of associations which have the effect of disrupting an already less-than-seamless narrative.

Miller privileges Woolf's emphasis on the binding nature of music but admits that "*Between the Acts* is full of breaks in that rhythm, interruptions, silences, gaps, cacophonies, incompletions" (220). In disrupting the apparent solidity of historical narratives, Woolf focuses the reader's attention on the very silences that keep the narrative disjointed and disunited. In fact, those silences (easier for a woman to comprehend, according to Miller) are the truth of Woolf's fiction. They are the clear representations: "If the gap, the something missing, is the 'truth,' then the proper work

of the writer would be to make that gap appear. The vacancy can be revealed by breaking the rhythm, by sudden sinkings, open places in the text, incompletions, vertigoes" (224). This interpretation of Woolf's experiment with the novel form implies a disruption of straightforward meaning-making. No longer is meaning conceived as a binary system; instead, the relationship between signifier and signified is an absence or a silence. Miller's notion of disruptive silence takes on explicitly feminist overtones in Barbara Babcock's interpretation of *Between the Acts*: "The liminal form, the bricolage, and the multivocality of [the novel] seem rather a deliberate critique of a variety of masculine structures beginning with 'his' sentence" (95). Babcock criticizes Miller for his essentialist view of women writers but goes on to outline Woolf's introduction of gaps into her narrative through the use of "ellipses as well as italics to underline the discontinuities and inconclusive nature of language. And when she does not actually create a space diacritically, she creates one with intervening phrases and clauses between subject and verb or verb and object" (97). Reflexivity also functions to introduce gaps into the text and, like Laurence who is discussed below, Babcock suggests a connection between these narrative lacunae and Kristeva's notion of the semiotic. Babcock makes the link between Kristeva, textual disruption, and the allusions to matriarchal myths, noticed by earlier feminist critics.

In her book *The Reading of Silence* (1991), Patricia Laurence also engages in a critique of Miller while building on his reading of Woolf's novel. Because of his binary concentration on the apparent mimetic accuracy of Woolf's narrative in opposition to its self-reflexivity, Laurence disagrees with Miller's final assessment of Woolf's language: "Miller's perspective . . . though brilliant in its analysis of the elements of repetition, posits an expectation of harmony, a female rhythm of 'filling spaces' . . . that does not go far enough in expanding the field of sound to include the silence that operates in all of Woolf's writing. Woolf's narrative practices and notions of rhythm in the novel exceed Miller's theory" (211, quoting Miller 229). Laurence extends the reading of silence that Miller begins to articulate by incorporating a Kristevan, psychoanalytic approach to gaps and fissures in language. Like Marjorie Perloff's assessment of Stein, Laurence's analysis looks forward to John Cage's understanding of the relation of silence to music (and by extension to art). Unlike Perloff, however, Laurence posits a meaning potential for these "silences" by suggesting that they represent irruptions of the semiotic (in Kristeva's terms) into conventional language structures. Silence is figured in the novel through space and rhythm (172), and through reflexivity since it distances the reader, making her pause for a moment while "a reciprocal relation of reading the author's thoughts and then pausing to consult one's own mind and imagination is established: 'read-pause; words-

silence; author-reader'" (173). The pulses of rhythm are a metalanguage which imitates or represents the pulses of the mind, moving beyond the strict boundaries of signifier-signified representation. Sweepingly analogous, in Laurence's article, to a "modern musical composition" (180), the sporadic rhythm of *Between the Acts* functions "to compensate for other kinds of loss that relate to the meanings of words" (194). Woolf's representation of this process, introducing silence which invites the movement of the mind or other loose external dialogues with the text, can be seen in the pageant: "Art performed outdoors, Woolf suggests through Miss La Trobe's play, must incorporate, not oppose, nature (in the Renaissance tradition). Nature too then becomes part author, as in John Cage's theory of music" (208). But "Nature" cannot be incorporated into the gaps in the narrative: only the representation of Nature. In order to function in the novel as an intrusive discourse, nature must be named.

Comparison between Sitwell, Stein, and Woolf

Façade, Four Saints in Three Acts and *Between the Acts* share a similar attitude towards the constructive and apparently limiting discourses of conventional power relations (call them monologic, or logocentric). That is, all of them question through compositional method and through collaboration, the active power relations inherent in discipline. In this shared characteristic, these works are

all part of a similar feminist project. By questioning conventionally patriarchal structures in the restructuring of their discourses, these narratives (in the loosest sense of the word) undermine the apparent stability of controlling language and disciplinary practice. By engaging in active collaboration with composers (in the case of Stein and Sitwell) or by disrupting the transparent certainty of narrative language, its ability to represent (as Woolf does), these writers question the function of discourse. They offer a model of signification which deconstructs the signified/ signifier binary at its root, revealing language to be empty and excessive. By engaging in a dialogue with music, this reconceptualization of signification is confirmed. These dialogues, between writer and composer and between internally conflicting discourses, repeat fragments of cultural articulation (the waltz, the language of imperialist or rationalist certainty) but vary them by moving them out of a previously (apparently) stable context and juxtaposing them with other culturally recognizable fragments (ragtime, the language of feminine ambivalence). This fragmentation and juxtaposition is an active constellation, not a fixed and concrete textual reference.

Generically, these three works offer a productive comparison since each uses, and plays with, a conventional form: *Façade* (the most generically ambiguous) can be seen as a song cycle, *Four Saints* is an opera, and *Between the Acts* is a novel. However, Sitwell's poems are not sung but

spoken, the opera lacks the elements of conventional drama, and the novel's narrative refuses the assumption of representation. More specifically, while Sitwell's poems invoke lyric forms and are held together by common images and ideas, their language frustrates representation even as it invites association. Stein's opera employs a dramatic format with acts, scenes, and characters -- at least in name -- but the narrative as such is absent, so the "characters" do not function to propel a cause-effect narrative. Finally, while Woolf's novel establishes a conventional chronology, follows it and defines her characters' roles within that narrative, its narrative movement is made up specifically of small loosely associated vignettes. As well, the narrator refuses to maintain a third-person discipline, incorporating reflections on its own process of construction and "scraps and orts" of dialogue. Each one of these works presents a fragmented version of identity. For Sitwell, character and identity are associated with bits and pieces of conventional discourse, but those discourses are always interrupted and unsettled; derisive designations of Victorian femininity are interrupted by references to Amazons, imperialist notions of race are invoked but then rendered ambivalent. In Stein's opera, characters are multiplied, and their undefined identities are suggested through language associations alone. The characters in *Four Saints* are effectively cubist portraits. Woolf's characters are more conventionally developed than either Stein's or Sitwell's, but their central

identities are conspicuously absent, or unarticulated. Characters self-consciously articulate their own identities in terms of conventional discourses, "in love", married to "the father of my children", and at times they have no names for their central identity. The shifting of names in the narrative also functions to unsettle conventional narrative uses of character identity.

As well as revising conventional notions of genre and character, Woolf, Stein and Sitwell engage in a complicated play with language, which opens their works to dialogue. The narrative in *Between the Acts* represents language itself as hostile. It plays with ambiguity in representation, especially through self-reference, out of an acknowledged need to escape the confines of conventional discursive disciplines. In *Four Saints*, the expectation of conventional dialogue and its concomitant representation of events and characters is disappointed by the repetition of words and structures across designated character boundaries and by the reduction of any transparent notion that language might be representative of a real world existing elsewhere. In *Façade*, generic over-determination invited by the Waltz or the Nursery Rhyme is questioned by the parodic nature of the poems and by the repetition of ideas, w .ds and structures across the body of *Façade*. The discretion conventionally associated with the lyric form is violated by a crossing over from one poem to the next and this blurring of boundaries suggests a theory of reference that can be extended to

include intertextuality. In fact, the language of these poems flamboyantly exceeds any meaning function through repeated rhythms and rhymes. As well, the quotation or allusion to sources outside the body of poems is a form of representation which by invoking the association of an external reference provides a series of unarticulated associations as well as the explicit one(s). Likewise, the thematic or stylistic crossovers between poems invite associations between them which remain only partially articulated. The fluidity of the boundaries between poems attests to the fertile and productive shadow space between each apparently separate articulated unit.

As in *Four Saints*, the poetry of *Façade* offers a model for reading its relationship with its musical setting. That is, the interaction between music and text assumes a heightened importance when the notions of explicit referentiality of language, signifier/ signified, are modified. The language practices of both works, as seen especially in their respective play with genre, point to a fluid conception of meaning. Neither work suggests that language represents anything more real than other languages but at the same time both suggest that the very practice of representation is a practice of association. Reference is multiple and sometimes only half articulated: cultural artifacts accrete associations which may be passed on, referenced or quoted regardless of media. And this very repetition serves as a site of difference, a site of *shared*

articulation. In their different way, and to differing degrees, all of these works leave themselves open to dialogue by refusing a referential conception of meaning. By assuming an absence at the centre of every signification, and by emphasizing that absence through repetition, *Façade*, *Four Saints in Three Acts*, and *Between the Acts* open their textual boundaries to alternative articulations. The musical settings for *Four Saints* and for *Façade* constitute an active voice in their signifying performances. Virgil Thomson and William Walton composed scores which support and do battle with their librettos. Both composers use fragments of recognizable musical discourses and essentially tonal musical languages in much the same way that Stein and Sitwell use language discourses. And this familiarity in repetition has a similar effect: by using musical quotations, these scores make use of a kind of musical reference, or more properly, signification. In fact, just as in Stein and Sitwell, and in Judith Butler's conception of repetition, these familiar cultural fragments become reflexive and in so doing point to the artifice of musical construction. That process reveals the social construction of music as discourse. These new critical explorations lead the way to an explicit comparison of text and music, especially when developments in theories of music as a social text or discourse are accompanied with recent criticism of Stein and Woolf. The work of these two writers is often characterized as pushing genre and language to its conventional limits of expression, and while very

little criticism of Sitwell's work has been written, I believe that she engages in similar experiments. As scholarship directs us to an increasingly discursive conception of music, it also reveals experimental modernist writing as questioning and expanding the boundaries of language.

Chapter Three: "Something Lies Beyond the Scene": Walton and Sitwell dialogue in the shadows

Edith Sitwell's and William Walton's *Façade* offers an associational model for poetic form, language, and musical signification. Both the score and the music throw into prominence the logocentric assumptions of conventional discourse through repetition. By repeating, juxtaposing and parodying fragments of conventional discourses, whether the languages of imperialism or of impressionist music, Sitwell and Walton enact the play that underlies all signification. That play is rendered explicitly performative in the vocal gestures of the poems and the musical gestures of the played score. Through dialogue between music and text, *Façade* becomes self-referential and this reflexivity offers a view of discursive production as performance and as construct. Through the intersecting images of the shadow, the overtone and the scene or façade, signification is revealed to be a process of dispersed association rather than direct reference. The explicit divisions between sounds and images are reduced or blurred thereby enabling multiple shadings, implications and associations for each figure, whether in music or language. The practice of pastiche or collage uses the notion of external reference, whether to familiar language or music discourses, to highlight the constructed nature of discourse; that is, reference becomes self-reference. Thus, the conventions of art production, in their pretensions to transparency of representation, are disrupted: each element of the art form is borrowed and its very

repetition highlights its ironic and self-conscious cor ent. The work of art loses the illusion of depth and seems like a dynamic kaleidoscope of familiar but fragmented re-presentations.

This chapter will discuss the disruption of disciplinary boundaries both within signifying practices and between them. Like the cubists, symbolists and musical French post-impressionists, Walton and Sitwell were determined to invoke and undermine the languages associated with nineteenth-century self-assurance. The monologic character of discourses defining gender, race, and imperialism falls under parodic treatment in Sitwell's poetry while the apparent self-sufficiency of nineteenth-century musical discourses, whether classical or popular, "exotic" or local, is undermined by Walton's collage or pastiche style of composition. The poems rely on confusions of syntax, confusion of senses, the disruptions of rhythm and rhyme, the unsettling of binary meaning production, and a reliance on nonsense. The music not only repeats and parodies fragments of musical cultural documents, but it also opens up dialogue with the poems through the dispersed reference of accompaniment. The poems and music in *Façade* allow for an exchange of dialogue by disrupting disciplinary boundaries: the collage technique of the poems questions monologic discourses of gender and imperialism and the performance of music and text places the emphasis on the impermanence of

aural effects and the circulation of transformative discourses.

Walton and the Sitwells

Sitwell's relationship with music is the strongest of the three women in this study. She was a competent pianist and as a young woman undecided about her career path was encouraged by a cousin "to pursue a career in poetry rather than music" (*Early Unpublished Poems* Introduction 2). Thus, when her and her brothers' patronage of the young William Walton afforded her the opportunity to collaborate she jumped at it. By all accounts, Walton was reluctant at first but was talked into it. In his autibiography, Osbert Sitwell remembers Edith going over the rhythms of *Façade*'s poems with Walton, making sure he got them right (Kennedy 23). Rather than giving him the manuscript and letting him set it, as Gertrude Stein was to do with *Four Saints in Three Acts*, Sitwell took an active interest in the music as Walton set the poems, even producing more poems while he composed.

As *Façade* was one of Walton's first compositions, it engages in playful experimentation and is clearly influenced by contemporary trends in music and theatre, most notably recent music theatre from France. In a 1921 issue of *Wheels* (the poetry journal started by the Sitwells), Osbert Sitwell contributed a piece called "Who killed Cock Robin?" which was directly related to Jean Cocteau's manifesto for Les Six, "Le Coq et l'Arleqin" of 1918. In this essay, Osbert makes "use

of what he had borrowed from Cocteau and add[s] his own squibs on what was wrong with contemporary poetry" (Cevasco 24). In addition to this obvious influence, Walton wrote in a letter home to his mother dated November 17, 1919: "'I went to London yesterday for the afternoon and saw the ballet Parade. It was very marvelous, especially the scenery. The music was by Erik Satie, a Frenchman'" (quoted in Kennedy 15). Finally, in her introduction to the *Collected Poems*, Edith Sitwell compares some of the poems of *Façade* to techniques used in *Parade*: "as Jean Cocteau said of another work of more or less the same kind, the ballet 'Parade,' in which he, Picasso, and Satie collaborated, the work is 'the poetry of childhood overtaken by a technician'" (*CP* xvii). Sitwell and Walton sought to shock the angels of British culture in the same way that Cocteau and *Les Six* sought to unsettle the expectations of the French. Rejecting the late-nineteenth- and early twentieth- century art cultures of Wagner, Debussy, the Impressionists, and the Georgian poets, Walton and Sitwell painted the façade of a protesting canvas.

Textual/ Performance History

Like other modernist poets, notably W.H. Auden and W.B. Yeats, Sitwell continued to revise her own canon until her death. Thus, not only did the pieces of the performed *Façade* change from performance to performance but also the printed poems changed from edition to edition. Though many of the poems written for *Façade* stayed under that title in the

various publications of Sitwell's work, many others moved in from other collections and others moved out -- some poems moved in *and* out over the years.[1] Most of the poems which remain common to the performed versions and to what critics call the "definitive" version, the score published in 1951, also recur in similar groupings in the various print versions. An important exception remains the poem "Dark Song", which was never included in a performance but which offers an interesting look at certain recurring images in the "definitive" poems. This poem operates as a performative example of the play with signification that Sitwell's work opens up through its evasion of explicit representation. "Dark Song" acts as a silent partner to the poems in the "definitive" *Façade* since it is in and out of the grouping so named. As well, it offers a discursive representation and disruption of rigid gender disciplines. It associates female sexuality with animal impulses, fire and the night: "The fire was furry as a bear/ . . ./ The brown bear rambles in his chain/ . . ./ The maid sighed, 'All my blood/ Is animal. They thought I sat/ Like a household cat;/ But through the dark woods rambled I . . ." (*Collected Poems* 149). But this rambling night-time desire is, like the bear, "captive to cruel men", confined by expectations of femininity placed on the maid by a masculine culture. These expectations are avoided through the avoidance of naming. That is, the maid is and is not the bear, they share qualities but they are not signified/ signifier. The discipline of patriarchal

expectation is exceeded by a slippage of metaphor. The dislocated poem serves to inform, obliquely, the rest of the poems in *Façade* through its associations of sexuality with the dark (and with furriness and heat) as well as the connection between confinement entailed by patriarchal or imperialist conceptions of gender which are repeated, echoed and shadowed throughout the poems in *Façade*.

The first, perhaps unintentional, indication of the true playful nature of language, as represented in *Façade*, is the inability of the name of that "work" to contain all its diverging components. That is, the textual history of *Façade* offers a supplementarity of signification: the name *Façade* refers to a large and interchangeable mass of poems (themselves often in a state of flux). *Façade*, the name, functions as a container for a series of poems. As any title of a work seems to do, it appears to limit the object of study and performance, defining boundaries, giving shape. However, as I will attempt to demonstrate, the label imperfectly covers a constantly shifting collection of individual poems and settings. That is, the "work" *Façade* is really a name for a group of poems and settings whose composition, number and order changed with every publication and/ or performance -- even after the deaths of its authors. The textual situation of *Façade* itself is a performance as the texts are never settled but always deferring to what has one before. It is also important to know the textual history of *Façade* because the work changed significantly over

time and this instability must be kept in mind during the specific discussion of the 'definitive' 1951 edition of the score (which is my primary source for this chapter).

The changes that Walton made over the years to the performance scores, the addition and exclusion of certain pieces, are said to have a revisionist narrative similar to his own development as a composer: "*Façade* as it was originally conceived was a sparer, more 'modern' work than it became" (Kennedy 35). This change suggests that just as Walton moved from a position as young, revolutionary "bad boy" of the English music scene to established, conservative composer, so did *Façade* lose some of its early, more tonally radical influences, like Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*: "as the work progressed, burlesque and parody became predominant and Edith Sitwell's poems were based on dance rhythms" (Kennedy 35). As well, Walton's orchestration became richer, his experiments lost their flirtation with a-tonality, and his influences became, albeit parodic, more popular in origin. This movement is underlined by his increasing interest in the language of jazz, though this language is itself an ambivalent mode of expression and one celebrated by the Parisians as well. Other assorted influences were, of course, *Les Six* and Satie, Debussy, Ravel, Italian folk music (he spent considerable time in Italy with and without the Sitwells), and Stravinsky's *Les Noces* and *L'Histoire du Soldat* (Kennedy 8).

The performance history of *Façade*, whether or not it reveals the increasingly conservative nature of a maturing William Walton, certainly shifts its emphasis over time. The earliest performance (1922), in the Sitwell drawing room at Carlyle Square, is characterized not only by spare and modern harmonies but also by a particularly modern discontent in the poetry itself. This character is realized most in the poems that were subsequently dropped from the performance roster and those which had not yet been added. "Small Talk" is one of the poems and settings subsequently dropped, though it was included in the performance schedule until June 1926, and is a particularly "modern" example in both music and language. The wandering and somewhat dissonant duet between cello and clarinet moves to a tremolo accompaniment to the poem about the death of Cassandra. The madwoman/ prophet's death is unremarked except by "Edith Sitwell" whose presence is explicitly referred to in the poem and the death takes place in a thoroughly banal setting: a small (Bavarian?) pub. As far as I know, "Small Talk" is the only example of Sitwell's authorial reflexivity, referring directly to her own presence in her work (a modern, or more fashionably, *post*modern move), and this poem suggests an alliance between the poet's inability to engage in small talk and the death of the prophetess. Sitwell, the muted modern (woman) poet, is the only one in the beer-drinking party to recognize the loss of Cassandra. The link between the poet's appalled silence and Cassandra's death implicitly establishes "Sitwell" as a

modern day Cassandra, but silenced by the middle-class ignorance of modern society. In these early performances, the poet, as did many of her contemporaries, makes a direct plea for the importance and the impotence of the modernist poet. In "Small Talk", Sitwell augments this familiar (to us at any rate) complaint by choosing a *female* classical figure to stand in as the poet, or the death of the poet. The tremolo accompaniment, harmonically unresolved, adds to this notion of suspended narrative, an ironic articulation of silence. In later versions, this portrait of the modern woman poet is effaced even further, but its disrupted presence was an important part of the early productions and fragments of it can be seen circulating through the later versions.

The familiar, parodic, playful pieces such as "Hornpipe," "Long Steel Grass [Trio for Two Cats and Trombone]," "En Famille," and "When Sir Beelzebub" appear in this early version but their good humour is mitigated by the inclusion of "Switchback," "Bank Holiday" and "Springing Jack".[2] In the first public performance (Aolian Hall 1923) about which so much mythology has developed[3], "modern" characteristics of the first performance are carried over, but a few more of the parodic, fully orchestrated settings and poems make their way in ("Valse," "Jodelling Song," "Something Lies Beyond the Scene"). As well, the order begins to reflect direct thematic connections between the poems: for example, "Gardener Janus Catches a Naiad" and "En

Famille" begin the performance, emphasizing the shared gender politics between sexual violence and Victorian family dynamics. These two poems are followed by "Mariner Men" and "Trio For Two Cats and a Trombone" which share a preoccupation with sea travel and imperialist "dialogues." "A Man From a Far Countree," "Herodiade's Flea," and "Through Gilded Trellises" make a tenuous ironic alliance between racial "otherness," darkness, and eroticism or desire. In fact the last three poems of the list move away from the playfulness of "Hornpipe" or "Jodelling Song" and back into the quiet unease associated with modernity. "The Last Gallop" is an Eliot-esque denunciation of the wasteland of contemporary culture, describing as it does slums and drunks and comparing "whiteness" to the colour of the "winding-sheet" and a frightened face. The accompaniment offers an ironic, upbeat juxtaposition to this pessimism. "Aubade," about the miserable lot of the servant girl and early morning rain, leads into the unsettling contrasts of the final poem, "The Owl". This poem ends the performance with a decidedly ironic juxtaposition of musical setting and poetic tone. Like "Small Talk," the setting is tonally unsettled and dominated by tremolos, but the poem appears to be a nursery rhyme about Mrs. Bunch the white owl. Again, though an ironic juxtaposition of poem and setting continues throughout *Façade*'s history, these two examples, "The Last Gallop" and "The Owl," remain the most ironic.

Slippery Discourses

The title for *Façade* was reputedly chosen in response to an unflattering assessment of Edith Sitwell and represents a reappropriation of the sort of criticism she usually lashed out angrily against: "[the Sitwells] made use of a snide remark someone had passed about Edith: 'Very clever no doubt -- but what is she but a facade' [sic]. . . . The choice of title was also meant to imply that though something at first glance may appear to have only surface meaning, closer inspection and reflection may reveal far more" (Cevasco 27). The literal façade of the performance was a simply painted screen behind which Edith sat and recited her poems through a Sengerphone (precursor of the megaphone) mounted in a hole in the screen. Thus, Sitwell herself, her voice and body, existed behind the façade of the performance which allowed the audience "to concentrate chiefly on the auditory qualities of the poems" (Cevasco 27). These apparently simple symbolic relationships are complicated, however, by the poems' own preoccupations with issues of surface and depth, by the intertextual relationships that the title invites, and by the precarious textual history of this "work".

The façade of the performance can be seen as a representation of the acts of signification that Sitwell's poems and their performance aim to disrupt. That is, the façade is a signifier but without a single signified. The

reference of the façade from the 1923 performance is, presumably, the body of the signifying poet, but the body is both confirmed by its voice and effaced by the façade. The signification of theatre, in *Façade*, does not include the discourse of physical gesture, but instead, redirects the focus to the gestures of voice and music. The discussion of representation is confined to some degree to voice, language and music, but the binary operation of representation is also deconstructed by hiding the signifying body. The signifier refers on-, or off-, stage in this production to an absent presence. The poem whose punning most clearly represents this impulse is perhaps "Something Lies Beyond the Scene" (added for the first public performance in 1923). If the scene is the façade, something either rests somewhere behind it or tells falsehoods behind it. The pun serves to unsettle any notion of fixed reality or meaning, and "beyond" lacks any sense of specific location or direct relation to the façade; instead, "something" may or may not be found within the vicinity of the façade. The scene in the performance is the painted screen blocking Sitwell from the audience's view. The effacement of her body renders her voice a trace of "something" and her voice may indeed be a lying voice, a voice which explicitly subverts signification. But the precise, concrete location of a source for the lying voice is forever deferred by the ambiguous spatial designation of "beyond."

Some critics have remarked on the mixture of styles, elements of parody and apparent nostalgia of these poems (Kennedy 27). The poems certainly incorporate and manipulate conventional modes of expression, but, it seems to me, they turn a rather more critical than sentimental gaze on the languages of the preceding era. Sitwell makes use of dance forms popular in the late Victorian and early Edwardian ages -- Waltz, Polka, Mazurka -- but subverts the content of these forms in a subtle and satirical critique of Victorian family, particularly patriarchal structures. She uses pastoral mythic allusions, nursery rhyme forms, snippets of conversational expression, images of imperialist domination, and an explicitly racialized language of the erotic, the dominated, the night-time worlds. But all of these borrowings are used to subvert their typical associations. As in a collage, bits and pieces of found material are juxtaposed with one another and their sheer fragmentation and juxtaposition defamiliarize them.

Each representative face is taken out of its conventional context and rearranged into a shifting tableau. References become multiple and unsettled as languages or modes of discourse are revealed as historically contingent and as relying on fixed notions of meaning, identity, in order to signify in a concrete way. Like the cubist collage, Sitwell's poems take the materials of the familiar world and render them two dimensional. Language is about itself, refers to itself, and not to a verifiable outside reality.

Thus, façades are interesting not so much for what deeper reality may lie behind them, but for what other façades lay beside them. Or, to put it another way, each façade refers to another, and when that face is divorced from notions of unity and depth, faces in general come to be flexible in association and signification.

Little if any critical attention has been paid to Sitwell's use of imperialist and gendered images, but her parody and manipulation of these discourses provide a fruitful illustration of the disrupted meaning process decribed above. Because imperialist and patriarchal discourses usually offer an illusion of concrete reference and a natural assurance of the ability of language to refer and represent, the disruption of the security of signification is achieved through the disruption of the binary structures of monologic discourse. Through their preoccupation with undisciplined vocality, with references to voice and music, the poems invite music into their unsettling project. Monologic discourses, such as patriarchy or imperialism, are disciplined discourses. They attempt and assume a reliable binary of signification. However, Sitwell plays on the inherent flexibility in signification by disrupting the certainty of binary theories of meaning production. By fragmenting conventional discourse, and by casting doubt on a binary operation of reference, Sitwell's language slides closer to music. Thus, the transgression of

disciplinary borders, whether they be political discourses or musical-language discourses, has ideological implications.

In "Trio for Two Cats and a Trombone", the forces of imperialism are a source of anxiety in their attempts to contain representation of the conquered. The poem's critique of imperialism reveals the excess behind binary attempts at discursive domination. A number of conflicting discourses are raised: gender, voice and colour. Set in Spain, the poem describes the relationship between the masculine conqueror and the feminine conquered. The figure of the woman is, not surprisingly, dark, but the men are also, and more unusually, racially designated as white. The conquered people are made "dumb" by the sound of military music, but another musical alternative exists, associated with the woman, the native. These binary operations (masculine/ feminine, white/ black, sound/ silence) are conventionally established, but immediately disrupted. The soldiers are contrasted from the beginning with the exotic woman: "Long steel grass --/ The white soldiers pass --/ The light is braying like an ass./ See/ The tall Spanish jade/ With hair black as nightshade/ Worn as a *cockade*!/ Flee/ Her eyes' *gasconade*/ And her gown's *parade*/ (As stiff as a *brigade*)" (*CP* 120-121; my emphasis). Even though her difference from the soldiers is emphasized, she is defined, through the excessive rhyming, in professional, masculine and military terms: cockade (badge of office), gasconade (from the Pyrennes, a braggart -- the soldier is defined later as "Swaggart braggadocio"), parade,

and brigade. While unsettling the masculine/ feminine binary, these terms also serve to define the supposed "other" using the language of the "self". And the excessive rhyming emphasizes the artificiality of these definitions, based as they are in a rigidly maintained and constructed discourse.

In a mixture of sense images reminiscent of the symbolists, the light is described in terms of sound, "braying", and moreover as rigidly defining a black/ white binary: "zebra'd black and white". It is this binary operation of the light that drowns out any potential, in the conquered place, for an alternative, native "music": "It will take away the slight/ And free/ Tinge of the mouth-organ sound". This silencing of a native self-articulation is of course reinforced by the military music: "Trumpet and the drum/ And the martial cornet come/ To make the people dumb -- ". The third voice in the poem comes from neither side of the already unsettled binary, but it is heard by the woman: "our voices thin and shrill". These voices conceivably the sound of the "long steel grass", which would appear, again, to have military references. However, they are also compared at the end to "the sound of the onycha/ When the phoca has the pica/ In the palace of the Queen Chinee!" Such obscure, possibly meaningless, terms (except for "pica") render the rhyme and the simile nonsensical. This negative comparison suggests that a discourse alternative to the binaries that structure colonial discourse is outside Symbolic discourse. The shrill voice is unlocatable but

audible. It remains undefined, not even by opposition (since opposition would be a binary position, and as such the voice from beyond is undisciplined and disruptive). The language that describes imperialism and anti-imperialism also serves to constitute it. This play with conceptual binaries is acted out as well in Sitwell's use of rhyme and rhythm. The apparent rigidity of form demonstrated by Sitwell's poems actually serves as a critique of the notion of formal rigidity: the strict rhythm and and the excessive rhyming force the language into nonesense. That is, just as ideologically informed notions of natural structures of identity are revealed as artificial and in fact dispersed, so are disciplined poetic structures turned back on meaning in order to obscure and complicate it.

The poem invites musical associations most obviously through reference: light braying, mouth-organ sound, martial music, shrill voices. Walton's accompaniment responds to this invitation to dialogue, but also complicates it. The piece begins with a solo trumpet in a military fashion but slips into a melody in the saxophone in the style of *Bolero* as the voice enters. The music engages in a direct dialogue with the "martial cornet" of the poem in its use of a military trumpet motif. However, it immediately introduces what would appear to be a anti-imperialist discourse with the *Bolero*-like theme. This apparent opposition is reinforced by the rhythmic conflict between the voice and the accompaniment: the vocal line is rigidly maintained in a

martial duple meter while the melody in the winds is characterized mostly by triple meters. At moments the militaristic snare drum enters. Thus, the music maintains an ironic dialogue between the caricature of the conquered native and the martial conqueror. The suggestion of Ravel's musical style, and perhaps Bizet's, suggests also that the Spanish jade is constituted by the language of another, a nineteenth-century fashioning of the exotic woman, like Carmen. The steely voices, as an alternative to these culturally embedded discourses, disrupt the signification through the coincidence of musical practice and the excessive rhyming. The recurring and structuring rhyme motif of the poem is the repeated "ee" sounds: "See," "Flee," "Tee-hee," "And free," "The," "But we," "He," "She" and "Queen Chinee!" and the significant musical motif, particularly towards the end, is the high, muted trumpet which makes a rather reedy sound not unlike the "ee" made by the reader's voice. This very tenuous dialogue between orchestration and textual practice evades direct representation but offers an alternative voice to the confining discourses that music and text refer to and disrupt. These voices are articulated outside the conventional discursive space of binary signification. Instead, they participate in an unsettling play between signification and articulation.

The textual variations between different printings of the same poem also inform this play with language especially through the ambiguity of racial designation. The most

dramatic example of this is found in "Four in the Morning". This poem addresses miscegenation, shifting racial categories and the connection between identity and musical categories, particularly tempo. The longest version of this poem appears in the *Selected Poems* from 1936, and at least three other versions appear in *Façade and Other Poems 1920-1935* (1950), in the score version of *Façade* (1951), and in the *Collected Poems* of 1957 (see Appendix). In all the versions, "Mr. Belaker/ The allegro negro cocktail shaker" is characterized as marginal or outside: "in at the window then looked he". In conventional modernist parlance, the "black" man is associated with the inverse of the conventional ("white"-dominated) world, and Sitwell's representation largely replicates this ideology. Her Mr. Belaker is outside and other to the structures of (white, European) civilization, and he is allied with the fluid, changeable forces of nature and with the dangerous and erotic night (after all he is a cocktail shaker). These attitudes are not only consistent with many Modernists' racist assumptions of the representatives of black or African cultures as primitive and elemental, but they are also consistent with Sitwell's own ideologically repressive use of such discourses in *Gold Coast Customs*. However, the changes in this text in its various editions as well as the poem's own indeterminacy unsettle to some extent the binary operations of the categories established to describe race. In destabilizing this black/ white imperative, the poem goes some way, perhaps

inadvertently, towards revealing racial categories as constructed within larger discourses of power relations. Again, the unsettling of the discourse suggests a disruption of the monologic status of power operations.

Two dominant images of this poem, as in "Trio", are specularity and voice, or sound. Mr. Belaker is not only the silent object of observation but he is also figured as having some power of the gaze himself, and it is within this context, looking or being looked at, that racial or colour binaries become unsettled. The source of his alienation is obliquely attributed to his racial identity, the fixity of which is subtly undermined. Early on in the poem, he "raced through the leaves as white as water", and this movement is contrasted with the final lines which find Mr. Belaker on the outside of a window looking in to a well lit room (it is night). In turn he finds himself being observed by the woman inside the room: "And his flattened face like the moon saw she/ Rhinoceroses-black (a flowing sea!)". Even though this comparison leaves the child-of-nature stereotype fully intact, the "Negro" man compared to a wild animal, these final lines do unsettle the apparent binary of black/ white. They contradict the earlier characterization of "leaves white as water" in the image of a black sea. As well, his face is compared to the moon, which if black, would not be visible. Thus, his alliance with the night, which keeps him outside, is unsettled since if his face is like the visible face of

the moon, he is white, but if in darkness and invisible, he cannot be seen from inside.

The anxiety reflected in this shifting of colour designation is also revealed in the difficulty the poem has in containing its image of miscegenation. That is, the racial blurring invited through miscegenation is censored in the different versions. In all versions the "flowing" of Mr. Belaker's journey is momentarily arrested by "catching" a nursemaid. Once again this serves as an example of the stereotype of the black man as excessively sexual, and the fearful assumption that this predatory sexuality is turned on white women. Cut from the 1950 and 1951 version is the racial designation of the nursemaid and her participation in an active outdoor performance: "White is the nursemaid on the parade". The racial designation of the nursemaid in the earlier versions operates then as a significant element of ambivalence, and the censorship of that designation further attempts to contain and complicate that anxiety. In the later versions as well, the idea of the parade, an outdoor, multimedia performance as a place for crossover between apparent oppositions is de-emphasized. The anxiety over racial and erotic categories, and over imperialist versus democratic modes of expression, suggested by these changing revisions permeates even the definitive version of *Façade*. Not only are these themes raised continuously throughout the body of the poems, but the allegro shifting movement between printed and/ or performed versions is echoed or shadowed in

the stylistic and musical shifts and borrowings between the poems and their setting.

Aside from colour or specularity, voice and music take on a conflicting status in the different versions and especially in the setting. The changes to this poem operate to drastically reduce Mr. Belaker's voice in the poem. Once again, Sitwell participates in an imperialist move herself in her assumption that she could, in any way, speak for a "Negro cocktail shaker". In this assumption she not only appropriates his voice but assumes a false understanding of his experience. On the other hand, the anxiety that characterizes other changes to this poem also renders the subject, Mr. Belaker, effectively mute. The longest version includes a long speech in the voice of Mr. Belaker about his sense of hurried alienation, "Why am I lost/ Down the endless road to infinity toss'd", and while these two lines are preserved in all versions, much of the appended self-description is cut from the 1950 and 1951 versions. The voice of Mr. Belaker is reduced. While remaining mindful of the poem's significant ideological limitations, we can trace a relationship between the allegro fluidity of Mr. Belaker's identity and the andante of the woman in the room. The very fact of his exclusion enables his rapid fluidity, and it functions as the source of the poem's disruptions of racial binaries since racial definition is connected with the static confinement of the "ghost room". Definitions are revealed to

be constituted in discourses which can be fluid and transforming rather than fixed and limiting.

The threat of miscegenation and its implied blurring of racial distinctions is a significant motif in *Façade*. The repetition of this idea serves to unsettle conventional forms of expression and even of social order. That is, the rigid hierarchy built into racial binaries, gender binaries, or imperialist binaries is part of an overall hierarchy of expression in ideology and language. Just as race, colonialism, and gender are revealed in Sitwell's work to be constructed categories whose elements in fact exist on a sliding continuum, so is language revealed to be performative, aural, rhythmic and able to approach the fluid signification of music. The character from southern geographies is eroticised and dark. He or she is an indeterminate figure not only by virtue of its semi-sublimated sexuality and its mixing of miscegenation, but also through the very confusion of racial definitions. In "I Do Like to Be Beside the Seaside", the sea is a changeable and specifically sexualized space. Don Pasquito arrives with his bride, whom he leaves in the care of the scheming Erotis: "When/ Don/ Pasquito returned from the road's end,/ Where vanilla coloured ladies ride/ From Sevilla, his mantilla'd bride and young friend/ Were forgetting their mentor and guide./ For the lady and her friend from Le Touquet/ In the very shady trees upon the sand/ Were plucking a white satin bouquet/ Of foam, while the sand's brassy band/ Blared in the

wind" (*CP* 153-154). Vanilla is both dark, as the bean, and light, as the flavour (ice cream, custard). The eroticised sea foam is white while the shade of the trees is dark, even, as in "A Man from a Far Countree"[4], the voice of the desiring other. Thus, the erotic narratives, which are mostly associated with exotic, warm places, in *Façade* are times of transformation. On the edge of discovery or vehicle of domination (the sea), the shade is at once a dangerous place and a "cocoon" ("The Wind's Bastinado"). Dark and light are combined in shadow where the distinction between them is questioned, and this indeterminacy or ambivalence is productive. In the poems with more sexualized, erotic/ exotic content, Walton employs a Spanish or Ravelian flavour, consisting mostly of repeated ostinati in the saxophone and the use of castanets in the percussion. This association suggests that the erotic/ exotic may be a constructed category as well. In a few of the poems found nearer the end of the definitive *Façade*, these distinctions between quotation categories and between genres start to break down, or rather they are contrasted and rebuilt. In "I Do Like to Be Beside the Seaside", the popular musical quotation (from which the piece gets its name) is combined with the rhythm of the tango, castanets, and the occasional Debussy reference in the woodwinds. These generic mutations accompany the poem's interest in the transformative power of shade and the erotic. Thus, as poetic categories become transgressive of isolating discourse, the music moves from a single defining generic

reference to a fluid combination of several. In their concern with the eroticised, exotic other, the poems in *Façade* are also concerned with the categories that define and confine characters in place, race and gender. In order for the binary between black/white or light/dark to be reduced, the poet needs to offer a place of slippage. The binaries that define difference and hierarchy are questioned or reduced in the shadow zone of signification.

These expressions of categorical flexibility serve to undermine the very referential nature of language. That is, with the deconstruction of definitive binaries like black/white, civilized/savage, colonizer/colonized, or masculine/feminine, language loses an explicit representative ability. The word or identity, the name, is a façade beyond which lies a shadow world of repressed desire or dream contents. The word-façade carries dispersed associations, multiple and self-contradictory. This play with conceptual binaries is acted out as well in Sitwell's use of rhyme and rhythm. The apparent rigidity of form demonstrated by Sitwell's poems actually serves as a critique of the notion of formal rigidity. That is, just as ideologically informed notions of 'natural' structures of identity are revealed as artificial and in fact dispersed, so are disciplined poetic structures turned back on meaning in order to obscure and complicate it. Once again, Sitwell's play with form and language structures questions the very notion of meaning by

representation, answering with a more flexible meaning by association.

Sitwell saw the two most important features of her work to be her use of rhythm and of rhyme, in other words, the aural elements of language. Poetry (and given her attitude towards Stein, all writing) is an art of sound and performance, closer to music than printed text. The printed poem is to the text what the musical score is to the performed piece. In Sitwell's attitude towards text we see an avoidance of the discipline or division of concrete textuality through a performative reading voice: "all these apparently bare spaces [between poems, stanzas, lines and words] are filled with unexpressed rhythm, heard only within the mind -- are filled, as we might say, with the muted beat of time -- only not regular, but moving now slower, now quicker. This unexpressed rhythm . . . is part of the air in which the poem lives" (*Aspects* 252). Like Garrett Stewart's reinterpretation of textuality, Sitwell's notion of rhythm suggests that it is both structuring and fluid, and moreover that it is historically contingent and expressive of a partially concealed other world, a shadow world. In her introduction to the *Collected Poems*, Sitwell claims that in *Façade* she sought "a rhythmical expression for the heightened speed of our time" (xv). And even as this rhythmic movement is clearly expressive of her historical situation, it also mediates between its social circumstances and the undefined inner world of the sub- or unconscious: "Rhythm is one of the

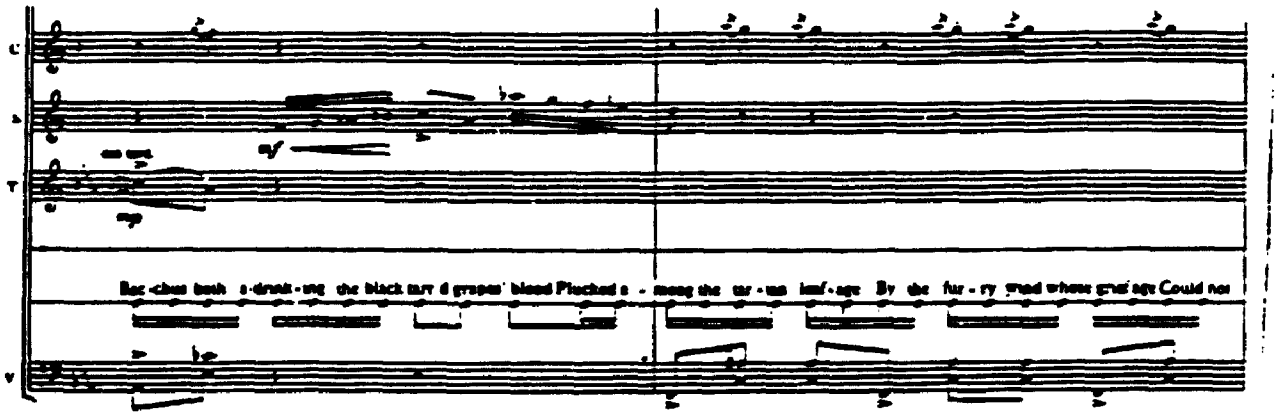
principal translators between dream and reality. Rhythm might be described as, to the world of sound, what light is to the world of sight. It shapes and gives new meaning. Rhythm was described by Schopenhauer as melody deprived of its pitch" (xv). Rhythm for Sitwell is thus a musical element and a meaningful historically relevant element -- these two categories are merged in one technique. Rhythm in Sitwell's text then undermines the artificial discretion or discipline conventionally associated with textuality. The voice, in effect, becomes the gestural medium for text in Sitwell's conception, and thus language escapes the confining boundaries of the signifier/ signified. The signifier becomes charged with a potential for excess, for dispersal rather than concrete reference.

Sitwell's poetry appears to be intent on formal containment, with its insistence on rhyme and rhythm. In fact, often the demands of rhyme and rhythm triumph over or operate in direct opposition to the demands of sense. In many of Sitwell's poems, extreme uses of rhyme, or assonance, have the effect of almost completely obscuring the meaning of the lines. In a poem like, for example, "The Wind's Bastinado" (*CP* 127), the rhyme is a kind of shadow which sheds only darkness on the contents of the poem. In other poems, "Hornpipe" (*CP* 155) for example, rhyme combined with rhythm complicates syntactic structures, sensible enough in themselves: the grapes whose black-tarred skins provide the drink for Bacchus and Captain Fracasse are "Plucked among the

tartan leafage/ By the furry wind whose grief age/ Could not wither." Here the words "grief age" are forced to rhyme with "leafage," and this coercion serves to reduce the spatial distinctions between words. The rhythm that lies latent in the blank spaces between words is employed in these lines in order to obscure difference. As well, the double demands of rhyme and rhythm here disrupt the syntactic demands of the lines: time cannot diminish the grief of the "furry wind", so the indirect object, in this case before the verb, is united with the verb, making the designation of part of speech almost impossible -- at least as the poem is heard, if not read. The very structures required to maintain notions of representation in language, separation and distinction, are broken down even as they are employed. After all, these lines rhyme, scan and carry a logical grammatical statement, but when all these "rules" are enforced too strictly, the sense that should be confined within escapes. The significance, though locatable in the language, also lies beyond it in a fleeting performative moment.

Just as the poem "Hornpipe" makes reference to Victorian England's conquest of the seas and imperialist ideology[5], so does the "nautical" setting draw attention to the rigid associations made with conventional forms, especially popular forms. The hornpipe reflects the narrow rhythmic range of the poem's scansion, emphasizing its reduction of grammatical range ("leafage" and "grief age") (figure 3.1). Ironically,

this strictness of form, in as much as it is derivative, highlights the nature of formal constraints in general and implicitly links these conventional restrictions of free play with the dominative politics of colonialism. Representation, then, is a double-edged sword. Conventional languages and ideologies are homogenizing, domineering, reductive, as they are represented in "Hornpipe". At the same time, however,



(fig.3.1)

their representation of representation, that is, the presentation of the conventional discourse as a *façade*, opens the space "beyond" the façade for free play. The discipline associated with the demands of rhyme and rhythm actually functions to obscure meaning, not to reinforce its representational function. By fragmenting and recombining conventional cultural expressions, Sitwell and Walton reveal the ideological underpinnings not only of the structures themselves, but of the very act of signification.

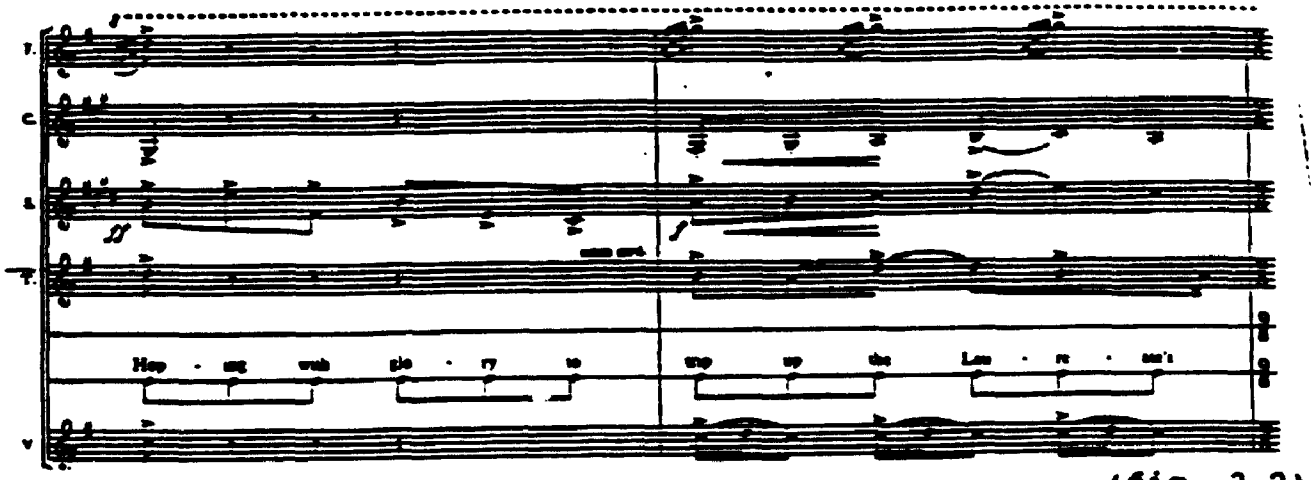
Rhyme is used not only to obscure meaning but also to draw parallels between images and ideas employed in the poems. These parallels are usually funny because exaggerated

and are often employed in a complicated parody of their subject. In "Sir Beelzebub", this parody is accomplished through reference, allusion and association as well as through ironic uses of form. The use of internal rhyme especially serves to concentrate attention on specific local groupings rather than on any argument or linear narrative:

> When
> Sir
> Beelzebub called for his syllabub in the hotel in Hell
> Where Prosperine first fell,
> Blue as the gendarmerie were the waves of the sea
> (Rocking and shocking the barmaid).
> Nobody comes to give him his rum but the
> Rim of the sky hippopotamus-glum
> Enhances the chances to bless with a benison
> Alfred Lord Tennyson crossing the bar laid
> With cold vegetation from pale deputations
> Of temperance workers (all signed In Memoriam)
> Hoping with glory to trip up the Laureate's feet,
> (Moving in classical metres) . . . (*CP* 158)

As in "Hornpipe", the rhymes of "barmaid" and "bar laid" eliminate the grammatically important space between the second set of words. In addition, this rhyme-rhythm conspiracy draws attention to the pun, that Tennyson's "bar" belongs to the hotel in hell, and of course to the parody of his poem "Crossing the Bar". The internal rhymes themselves (comes/ rum/ glum, benison/ Tennyson, vegetation/ deputation)

serve to unsettle the apparently rigid line lengths, and in effect the whole poem is itself an attempt to "trip up the Laureate's feet" as he crosses the bar. This parody gestures towards the absurd self-assurance of time, place, and division/ definition that characterized the "deputations" from the Victorian era. By tripping up the feet of the Laureate, using extreme rhyme patterns, Sitwell draws a parallel between the regularity of form and expectations of language and the metaphysical assurance that "Crossing the Bar" asserts. When in the beginning of Sir Beelzebub, the sea is blue *as* the gendarmerie, by the end it *is* the "blue wooden gendarmerie". The sea and the darkness of night are unqualified metaphors in "Crossing," and in Sitwell's poem this notion, that an image can stand unquestioningly in representation of a single idea, is parodied both in form (moving from simile to metaphor) and content (the sea as policing, not changeable and fluid). Thus, Victorian definitions of night as death become in Sitwell's work night as dream world, and dream worlds as moving, shifting elements drawn from the apparently rigidly constructed notions of reality and language she inherited. The dialogue between music and text is used in "Sir Beelzebub" for comic or parodic effect: the rhythm of the music is in opposition or syncopation to the rhythm of the poem (triple to duple) thereby "tripping up" the feet of the poem's meter (and its subject of parody, Tennyson) (figure 3.2). This musical disruption adds to the complicated layers of disruption in



(fig. 3.2)

the poem. The musical pun, unsettles even further the signifying certainty of language.

Overtones and Dialogues

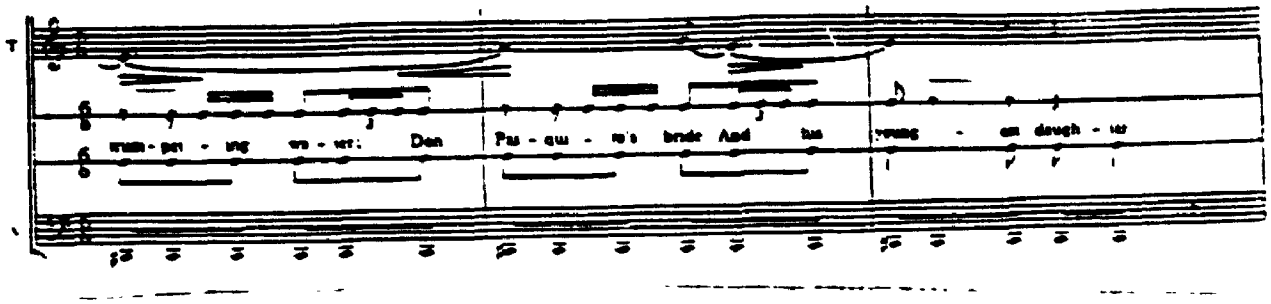
The lack of a referential centre that characterizes Sitwell's experiments with language is comparable to a kind of silence "beyond" signification. This is the dream world accessed by rhythm. And, as Morton and Helgeson point out in their introduction to *The Early Unpublished Poems*, silence is often paradoxically paired with music:

> Sitwell sculpts an unidentified center by naming the parts that are sculpted away. That center, which represents the real world and its demands, is a silent presence flickering among the shadows that fill her poems. . . . [The title of the poem, "Sweet music dreaming dwells"] emphasizes the word 'music,' yet the word 'Silence' is capitalized when it occurs within the lines in the poem, conferring upon 'Silence' a kind of authority or privileged place in both the action and

> theme of the poem. . . . And -- a characteristic Sitwellian method -- the poem attempts to define an elusive experience through a series of analogies. . . . The real world exists in an *aporia*, to use Derrida's term, present only as absence or silence: it is defined, and this definition is articulated, by contrast with various kinds of imaginings, with dreams, with sleep, with death (13-14).

The paradox that music is also a silence is thus a strategy of avoidance or indeterminacy. The scene conceals another scene beyond its own boundaries. The articulation of incompatible elements is a simultaneous naming and silencing -- a questioning of the ability of language to represent at all.

This absent centre once again provides an access point for music to engage in a similar play of signification with the text. In the musical setting for "Lullaby for Jumbo" (*Façade* 40), the trumpet enters at the line "thicker than hide is the trumpeting water" (figure 3.3), providing a clear crossover between music and text. This self-reflexive moment also underlines a strategy employed here which is common to many of the poems. The sleeping elephant is never directly described. Just as many poems in *Façade* refer only obliquely to their subjects, creating what Helgeson and Morton characterize (via Derrida) as an *aporia*, so does this poem describe "grey leaves thick furred *as* his ears" (my italics) and the thick "hide" of the "trumpeting water".



(fig. 3.3)

The substance of the elephant is absent from this poem as from a dream, and the motif in the trumpet points to the slippage of signifier/ signified: the "trumpet" as a musical instrument has come to represent the elephant as a discourse, less specific than the words, but referring to the absent elephant nevertheless. In this dialogue between music and language, both serve to perform the elephant through the repetition of various discourses. The conflict and circulation of discourses gestures fleetingly towards an animal never directly represented.

Sitwell not only subverts the notion of direct representation through allusion to and parody of the world outside her poems, she also repeats and varies a multiplicity of shadowy references within the body of her work. That is, images, rhymes, forms, and vocabulary cross-reference each other throughout the poems of *Façade*, and throughout her whole opus for that matter. Clearly images of light and darkness, images of the sea, and Victoriana as well as classical allusions and erotica permeate the poems of *Façade*. And these repetitions are varied each time they are used, in context and composition. To further increase the variability

of associations possible in each repetition of a phrase or idea, the image is often a combination of sense experiences -- the tangible and intangible.

A good example of the intangible made tangible, much like the confusion of sensory representation in symbolist writing, occurs in "Hornpipe" with the "furry wind". This image is repeated in varied combinations over many of the poems. Fur and wind are each associated with night, and in cases where they are not explicitly a nighttime phenomenon, the association accrues from past uses. In "The Drum" (*CP* 110-112), the implication, from the sound of the wind, is of furriness: "Is it black night?/ Black as Hecate howls a star/ Wolfishly and whined/ The wind from very far./ . . ./ Whinnying, whines like grass, the air". In "Four in the Morning", Mr. Belaker comments on "the whimpering greyhound wind", and in "Black Mrs. Behemoth" (*CP* 125), "Nobody came . . ./ Only a bugbear/ Air unkind,/ The bud-furred papoose,/ [illegible] young spring wind". The obvious animal associations of fur are combined with the indefinite nature of the wind to give it life and substance. As well, the associations pass through other "fur" references as in "The Bat" (*CP* 118), "Dark Song", and "Madam Mouse Trots" (*CP* 122). In these three poems, furriness is associated with an ambiguity of form, of sexuality and especially of light and dark; so in the nighttime setting of Madam Mouse, "furred is the light". Paradoxically the differing repetitions of images in these poems emphasize their unnamability by attempting an

explicitly sensual definition. The formal crossovers between images, as well as their sensual derangement, enact a failure of representation. The image which attempts precision finally escapes meaning categories altogether. This movement of referral and deferral is something like the performative text that exceeds all limitations through its very appeal to extreme discipline.

In his argument for Sitwell as a symbolist poet, James Brophy suggests that her combinations of conflicting languages or images into unified symbols, in a Rimbauldian derangement of the senses, are best exemplified in the symbol of the shadow: "the explication of this centrality 'shadow' necessarily includes a discussion of her symbolism of sun and darkness. Her presentation of the symbolic reconciliation inherent in 'shadow' is made in part by her continuing depiction of the extremes of light and darkness as being solely in themselves 'azoic' but nevertheless capable of generating life" (xvi). The apparent extremes which should define difference in fact overlap, since without sun we would have no shadow, without rhythm no melody. This overlap is indeed productive and not statically contained in a unified whole. The image of the shadow itself suggests variable definitions, spreading and receding, thereby generating a playful movement within and throughout the poems. The images, sounds, rhythms of the poems perform themselves by initiating dialogues and shifting references.

In the assertion of the concrete thing, hovers a ghost of itself or its opposite hovers -- a shadow, an overtone.

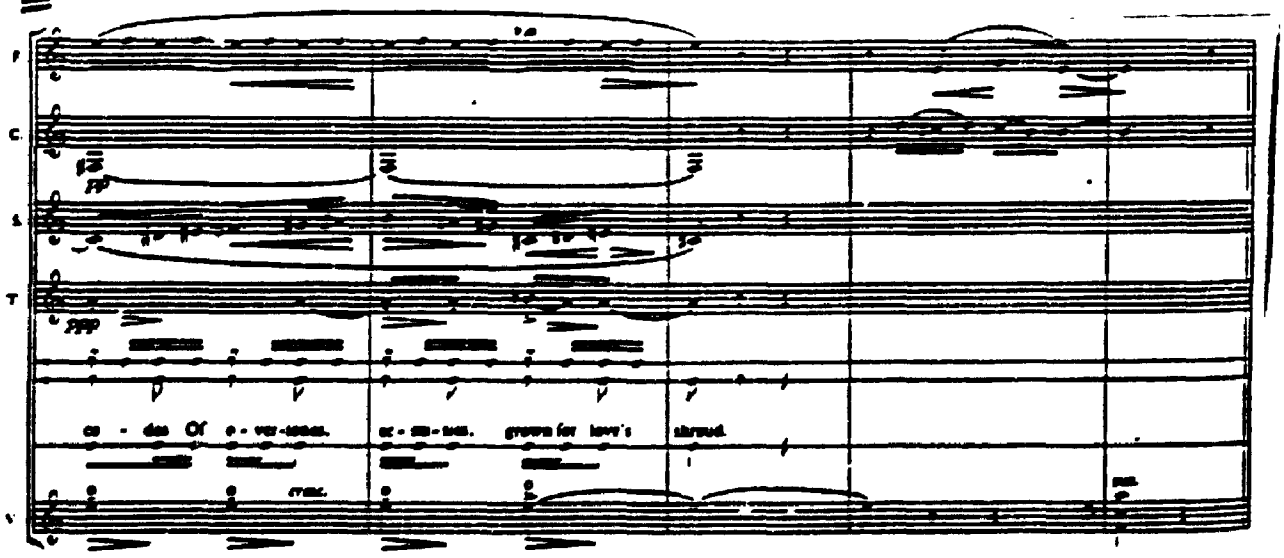
The poems of *Façade* suggest a theory of signification or creative discourse which steps outside the signifier/ signified binary of meaning. Language occupies a shadow world where the signified lies beyond the façade of the signifier, splintered and evocative but never concrete. Meaning is multiple and associational, and the shadow world beyond the scene is a dream world of worked-over images. Every image is a deferred response to the circulating desires of the dream. The shadow is a primary image for this space of ambiguity, danger and productivity, but an equally potent image is the less frequent "overtone":

> A clear representation of the decreasing mutual identity of pitches is found in the *overtone*, or *harmonic series*. This natural order of pitches functions as a part of our hearing process, and it operates as part of the tone production of almost all musical instruments. When we hear a tone, we recognize only its most prominent characteristic, for the 'tone' is usually composed of several different elements. In a sense, we hear only a *generalized tone*, for the less obvious features of its constitution escape our attention (Christ et al 26).

The overtone, as defined by conventional music theory, is the "natural"[6] basis for functional harmony wherein each note contains most of the elements of the diatonic scale, though the most prominent overtones are usually perfect intervals:

if the general tone is the tonic, then the next most prominent tone would be then fifth and then the fourth.

In Sitwell's poetry the overtone is allied with the shadow in its reference to a world existing just out of the range of the senses. In "Aubade" (*CP* 16), the rain "creaks, hardened by the light,/ Sounding like an overtone/ From some lonely world unknown". The unknown world could be equally a dream-world or a world of memory as in "By The Lake" (*CP* 148): "And as they walk, they seem tall pagodas;/ And all the ropes let down from the cloud/ Ring the hard cold bell-buds upon the trees -- codas/ Of overtones, ecstasies grown for love's shroud". In his setting, Walton plays with Sitwell's evocation of overtones in language by scoring harmonics in the cello part (indicated by a small circle above the note): the harmonic is an overtone generated, in a stringed instrument, by lightly touching the string as a tone is bowed. The result is a note higher in the overtone scale, and much less substantial than the bowed tone (figure 3.4).



(fig. 3.4)

Thus, the whispers from beyond, lovers' memories, are associated with the musical manifestation of the overtone. In this example, and unlike Schoenberg who deliberately avoided this form of music-painting by actively contradicting the text in the musical setting, Walton's music appears to engage in a dialogue, once again tenuous, with Sitwell's text, specifically with an image of slippery signification. The musical overtone, though it is only one musical reference among many in *Façade*, seems to offer a place of signification "beyond" the binary process of reference. Like the shadow or the "steely voices" from "Trio", the overtone dialogues with text and music, but it evokes associations rather than concrete references. The overtone escapes clear definition; it is unlocatable, almost unhearable, and yet it carries an uncanny known-before-and-forgotten quality. It is the voice from another world, the world of night and dreams, and is only reflected or deflected from the "real" solid signifier, the tone. Once again, evading the disciplined categories of the Symbolic (in Kristeva's terms), the overtone in language and music suggests a disruption of signification much like Kristeva's semiotic or Abbate's dialogue. The overtone may carry a charged half-reference in the setting of other poems that implicitly calls on a world beyond referential language. Since overtones are also produced in practice particularly when two voices sound at perfect intervals (fourth, fifth or octave), the accompaniments of some poems which appear to evoke an ethereal or otherworldly atmosphere may be in subtle

dialogue with the text. The overtones generated by perfect intervals invite associations with the more explicit dialogue between music and text in "By The Lake". In the accompaniment to "A Man From a Far Countree", for example, Walton has set this first-person discourse of the desiring, exiled, dark voice to parallel fifths in the flute and clarinet. The poem has no mention of overtones, or of a world "beyond", but the words of the poem's speaker issue from a dark desire which by the threat of miscegenation elides the separation between the dark space and the golden space. This elision produces overtones, voices from beyond, from love's shroud. Thus the setting echoes in music the figures suggested in language for the uncannily familiar and half-heard voice of transgressive desire. Another fleeting association with the overtone occurs at the end of "Herodiade's Flea" which was dropped from the 'definitive' version (*CP* 126): "Then came/ Courtier Death/ Blew out the candle flame/ With civet breath". The line "blew out the candle flame" is accompanied by a harmonic motif, or perhaps an upper register pianissimo, on the cello. In this case eroticism and death are combined in this intangible wind/breath from beyond.

The overtone offers a productive analogy for the procedure Sitwell follows, or rather for the repeated ideas that the poems explore. Beyond the analogy and along with many other examples, however, the overtone enacts a dialogue between the poem and its setting. That is, in the poem, the

image of the overtone implies an otherworldly discourse, a half-heard breath from the beyond or the dream. The music echoes or manipulates this association. The musical sound crosses over into the ambivalent designation of language. This notion of representation, the half-heard and half-articulate word or implication of the word, crosses over into musical expression, so the overtone musically not only exemplifies this shadow world language but also comes to be associated with it. The overtone is a musical extension of the notion of shadow. It is the indeterminate beyond of representation where images blur, overlap and cross over in their very articulation. The primary tone is, in monologic discourse, apparently unambiguous just as light and dark appear to form a consistent binary. In the overtone, as in the shadow, this illusory boundary is extended and dispersed. The dialogue between the discourses of music and of language, tenuously evident in the overtone, is illustrated or alluded to in various, more concrete ways throughout the body of *Façade*.

Before approaching the specific use of collage in the performance of text/music dialogue, we need to address the dialogue of difference between music and text. That is, sometimes the dialogue between words and music generates irony in both. In fact, each serves to reinterpret the other. Thus, the dialogues between these poems are not structured in an uncomplicated agreement between voice and music. In the setting for "Black Mrs. Behemoth" the familiar

triplet motifs that, to my ear, allude to French Impressionist music in other settings are freed even further from their conventional contexts. Like the music of Satie, this setting offers no tonal direction for the triplet motif, echoing the words "nobody came". The piece provides no harmonic variation or resolution for these motifs which ascend more or less chromatically. As well, the triplet motif is contrasted with an emphatically repeated series of major seventh chords at the beginning. Rather than invoking directly by association with recognizable musical discourses, this piece offers a more abstract portrait of character. Also an example of productive contrast between setting and poem, "Mariner Man" describes a dialogue between a young girl and an old sailor, and that dialogue is set to a duet between the piccolo and the bass clarinet, clearly representative of age and gender. But while, in the poem, the mariner man has most of the speech, in the setting, the two voices are not only equally represented but melodically equal: neither assumes an accompanying role. Thus, the setting enacts a reflexive dialogue with the poem since it suggests itself as a direct representation of the two voices but one which differs from their characterization in language. The relationship between the setting and the poem is one of dramatic tension. This dramatic tension, or the constrast between setting and music, is performative of a movement of difference. The reference of the music, in "Mariner Man" for example, actively contradicts or reinterprets the words, and

this disjunction while being performative in a different way from the example of the overtone, has a similar effect in that it adds another, differing voice to the dialogue. Within the musical discourse, similar disjunctions from the consistency of the form multiply signification, both musical and linguistic.

Façades and Parades

Text and music dialogue with one another most clearly by referring back and forth between themselves. Music refers to text and text refers to music. They accomplish this reference by using culturally mediated discourses. By repeating bits of conventional even clichéd expression out of their conventional contexts, and by juxtaposing those fragments with one another, the pieces of *Façade* function as a kind of parade, a moving oscillation of self-referential articulations. The references to musical Impressionism in conjunction with the decayed emblems of Victorian culture, jazz and black characters, Spanish motifs and the landscape of an eroticised colonization all function as large examples of this process of comparative/contrastive pastiche. The title *Façade* deliberately invokes the French ballet, *Parade*, as an intertext or at least as a shadow reference. The very fact that these words rhyme indicates an intentional shadowing on Sitwell's part, since rhyme is an integral part of Sitwell's multidirectional reference system. Similarities in sound draw attention in Sitwell's work to the overlaps

between seemingly disparate words and, at the same time, highlight the artificiality of language constructions even to the point where they deliberately obscure meaning. Thus, while *Façade* is a direct reference to *Parade*, it also highlights the differences between them. The most obvious parallel is the notion of the stage/ musical/ textual performance as a collage similar to the experiments of Picasso or Braque. As Cocteau points out in his manifesto, all the elements brought together in *Parade* are drawn from elements of contemporary life, but by being distanced from their conventional contexts and forced to cohabit, as it were, each of these fragments contrasts with each of the others. However, *Parade* is focused on contrasts between various discursive modes: not only linguistic or musical, but also visual and kinetic. Since it is a ballet, *Parade* is concerned with movement and space. A parade is a moving procession of various performances whereas a façade is a static front for a (possibly) mysterious process. Nevertheless, *Façade* invites an understanding of kinetic processes, partly through its emphasis on dance and dance rhythms and partly through the attention that the audience is forced to pay to the sound of the poetry and music -- especially to the kinetic effects of rhythm. The performative element of *Façade* is embodied specifically and self-consciously by the sound of the piece and by its attempt to produce a performative cultural collage.

Parodic collage results in a performative notion of discourse. The cultural signifier is taken out of context and juxtaposed with another repeated cultural signifier-fragment. The dialogues that develop between them, through conflict or support, mobilize the meaning process. By jumping from fragment to fragment, the song reconfigures performance as a reflexive exchange between media. In "Jodelling Song" (*CP* 142-143), Walton's and Sitwell's senses of parody and irony are at their most extreme. Rather than being a cheap rip-off of Stein's "Accents in Alsace" (as Marjorie Perloff claims -- see Chapter Two), this poem offers a parody of all things Alsatian. The culture of the Alps is likened to the sentimentality associated with young men, and the poem itself suggests that mountain-top kitsch is better known as emblematic of a transformative time, signified in part by "Ganymede". The music echoes the poem's ironic employment of stock imagery, for example the edelweiss and cow bells ("'Tirra lirra'"), with its not-so-cryptic references to yodeling songs and the *William Tell Overture*. This echoing also initiates a crossover dialogue with the text (which itself mentions the yodel and William Tell). Like "Lullaby for Jumbo", an animal reference in the poem receives an answer in the setting: "sweet birds singing" is accompanied by the flute trilling in its upper register. And in "Jodelling Song" this representation highlights to a parodic degree the lack of concrete naturalism in the poetic act. The flute represents the representation of bird song,

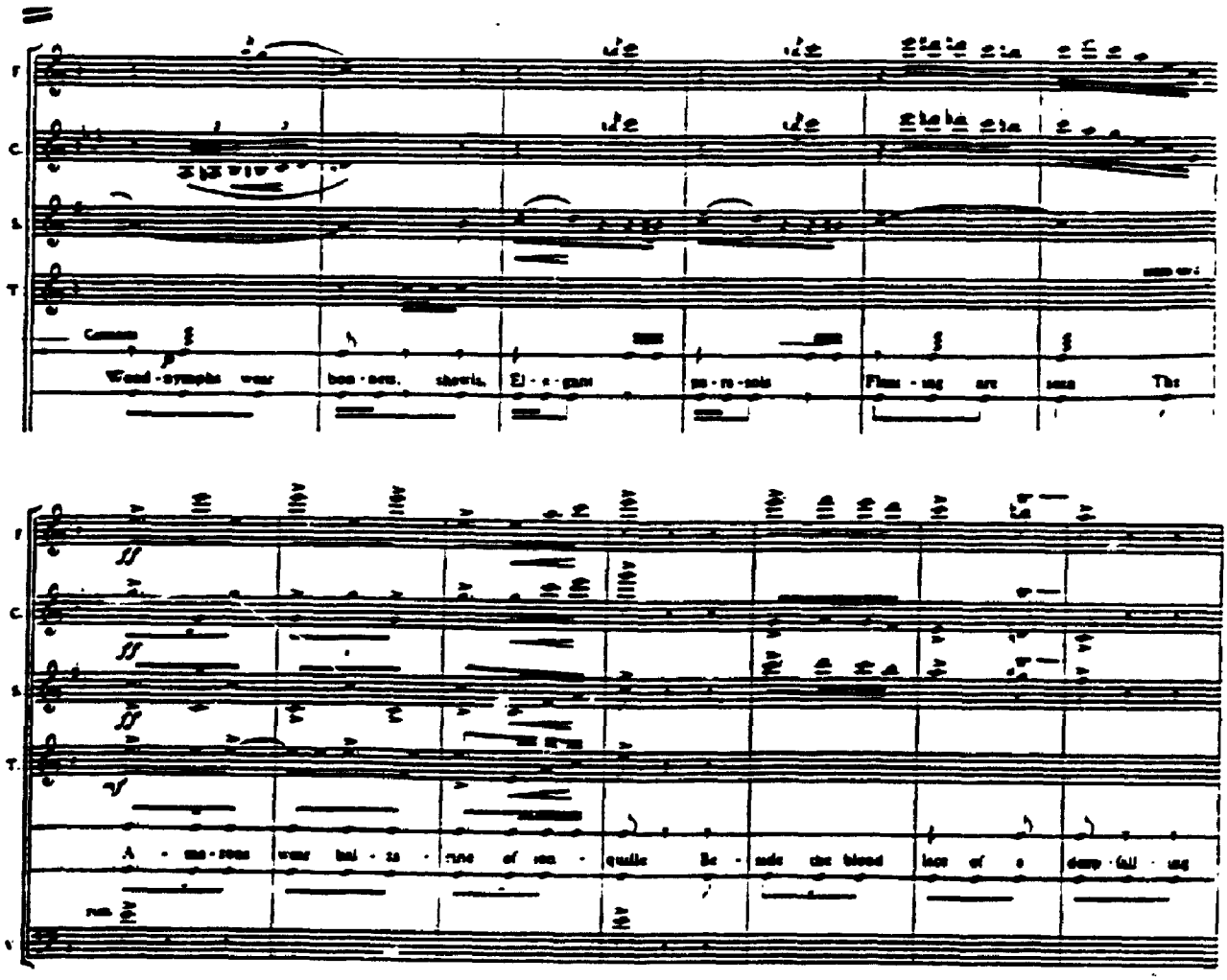
but even that representation is mediated by decades, even centuries of convention. The musical jokes reveal both language references and musical references to be cultural clichés, imbedded in a range of ideologically charged discourses. The recombination of these clichés forces them to play off one another, to defer and refer, and reveal their own construction. The quotations of the *William Tell Overture* function in "Jodelling Song" as does much of the quotation and allusion throughout the setting of *Façade*: these snippets from passing cultural regimes are representative of a particular historical moment, but in the repetition and juxtaposition of these familiar musical images they become ironic façades, disrupting any notion of an ahistorical depth of field in art.

As the second piece in the definitive *Façade*, "En Famille" pays similar attention to ironic contrasts and collusions between conventional cultural structures and the musical conventions, though not as popular perhaps as a hornpipe, of the late nineteenth-century. The patriarchal social order headed by naval commander and father[7], as accompanied by conventional expression: "'You could never call --/ I assure you it would not do at all!/ She gets down from table without saying "Please"/ Forgets her prayers and to cross her T's'" (*Façade* 18). The music associated with this family in Hell is directly derivative from Debussy's *Syrinx* or *Apres midi d'une faune*. The ascending/ descending melody in the flute with its 32nd-note flourishes draws an

explicit parallel between the late nineteenth-century Impressionist aesthetic and the late Victorian family structure and expression. Though lacking the regimented marshal flavour of the "Hornpipe", the music for "En Famille" attempts a similar representation of historical-cultural artifacts. The self-enclosed referential and ideological universe of the dominion and the family are echoed by the self-enclosed forms of musical expression. The absence of multiplicity in both the hornpipe and the apparently flexible "Debussy" points out the limiting nature of the language of imperialism and the family. Nevertheless, these apparently natural and unified languages are disrupted by the very quotation of their rigidity. As quotations, they are revealed to be fragments or snapshots which are defamiliarized and unnatural. "Waltz [Valse]," too, combines a Spanish flavour (castanets, glissandos and dotted rhythms) with the waltz rhythm in a critique of genre (European dance music) that accompanies an implicit critique of traditional gender roles and racialized ideas of beauty. Daisy and Lily are two "silly" young women who have nothing to discuss but fashion, but this gender stereotype of the Victorian dance-going woman is disrupted by hints of another world: the exotic variation on the waltz suggests a gentle tilting of their world. At the mention of Amazon fashion the waltz loses its descending staccato run in the flute for a heavy and fully orchestrated triplet accompaniment (figure 3.5). Thus, gender roles momentarily transgressed are associated

directly with a change in the music: from trippingly light to heavy in emphasis. Finally, the last lines of the poem associate the empty talk of the two women with the mythical Philomel, or rather the absence of Philomel: the silent rape victim is the inverted figure for the empty talk of the women. Thus, gender becomes obliquely defined as constructed and controlled from without.

Musical quotations often serve as the disjunctive



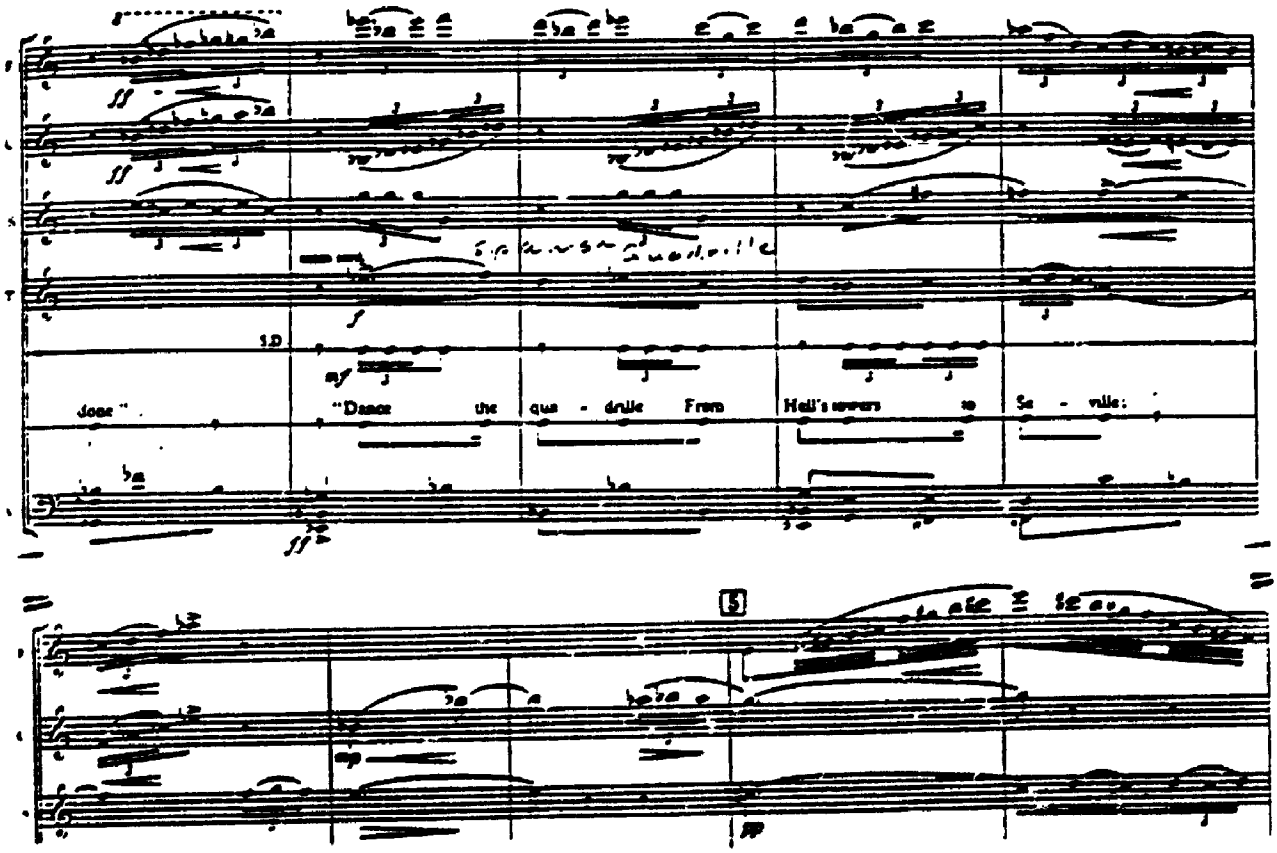
(fig. 3.5)

element of the setting, and this repetition of cultural discourses also serves to highlight the parade function of

the poems and the music. Spain is apparently the exotic locale for the poem "Through Gilded Trellises" (*Façade* 27-33), and like the other poems which employ similar themes, the subtle eroticism of place is combined with an ambivalent attitude towards race. The music participates in this setting once again through its reference to Ravel and Debussy and its use of Spanish trumpet motifs and castanets. The dialogue between music and text is invited by the text, but in orchestration appears to be the text's response to the music: a melody high in the flute precedes a reference in the poem to "Lovely bird will you stay and sing", and "tinkled tambourine" is preceded indeed by a tambourine being rattled. In the poem, the image of the tambourine is a simile to demonstrate the way in which the "heat mutters", a description which is itself a displacement through symbolist-like derangement. As in "Jumbo", the music and the language defer reference to the concrete manifestation of "heat". Thus, the reference between the music and the text is exchanged and thereby unsettled, disrupting the progress of the "narrative." The character of the music is relatively consistent with its sultry Ravelian saxophone, but the wandering musical accompaniment is momentarily disrupted by a Spanish dance motif in the trumpet: "Dance the Quadrille from Hell's towers to Seville". This reference jars the consistency of the piece for a moment and then disappears, its triplet figures gradually turning into the triplet figures of the Ravelian motif (figure 3.6) This fusion of

disparate motifs signals a half-articulated theme of the poem: sleep as transformative, pushing at boundaries. In this poem of the exotic/erotic siesta, the silence is once again compared to music: "O silence, enchanting as music!" (*Façade* 30). Thus, the music answers the words, part of and outside language, discursive but evasive.

A similar procedure is employed in "Scotch Rhapsody", a poem which parodies a Scotsman by the name of Gordon Macpherson and appears to include a veiled allusion to Henry James. The object of parody is the dislocated traveler, blown from here to there by the "tartan wind". The music, much like the music of "Hornpipe", participates in a rigid



(fig.3.6)

representation of Scottish music. To my ear, the piece seems to quote elements of British folk-music and the piece is a relatively conventional development of that quotation. The piece functions as a parodic portrait, and its parody is largely derived from the quotation which reveals the fragment to be part of a larger cultural reconstruction. Similarly, "Popular Song" is a portrait of Lily O'Grady, who carries an Irish name and a "shady" identity. Once again, racial ambiguity figures in this poem as a slippery signifier, though it does slip clearly into negative stereotypes at times. This portrait is created again through allusion to popular music as the melody from a popular song structures the piece.

William Walton and Edith Sitwell provide, in *Façade*, a dialogue not only about the fragmentation of nineteenth-century certainties, but also an example of discourse in performance. The very assurances that reinforced the political domination of colonial and patriarchal England are fractured and reconstructed in *Façade*, and that reconstruction renders assured discourse unstable. The revelation of discursive instability also reveals an instability at the level of signification and the disabling of the signifier/ signified binary opens language up to include music as a potential source of signification. The process of cross-referential, or self-referential dialogue, especially as it engages in a redeployment of cultural references, is performative. The gestures of voice and music

disable the illusion of a concrete referential potential for language, allowing both music and voice a movement of mutual, multiple references. That temporal, kinetic flux reveals text as performance.

Chapter Four: "Remembered as knew": saints performing

Opera would seem to be a medium eminently suited to what John Mowitt terms the *anti*disciplinary critical act. That is, opera provides a clear collaboration between text and music and ample opportunity to blur the distinctions between them. In opera the librettists and the composers share more than an analogy of form and/ or meaning. Traditionally, the libretto forms an uneasy and subserviant alliance with the music, though both, as cultural productions, carry distinct and often dialogic associations. What interests me particularly about *Four Saints in Three Acts* is the movement of language signification away from the illusion of representation and music's movement towards a greater self-reflexivity, or awareness of itself as a social event. Gertrude Stein's specific innovations in form can be attributed to her attention to the sensual/ aural (gestural) elements of language. As well, she experiments with indeterminacy. That loss of clear referentiality points to shared elements of music and language: neither has a fixed point of origin or a concrete objective reality, and both are ultimately constituted through performance (whether by reader, player or musician). In order to get at the relationship between the signification of language and that of music (or visual art, or movement), one must examine the way in which articulated events acquire meaning. I am suggesting that signification takes place on a continuum from

greater to lesser specificity and that it is bound up in a performative process of displacement, or repetition with difference. This model of signification requires a dynamic and fluid process that dispenses with the absolute dichotomies erected by disciplinary theories. This process of dynamic displacement offers an alternative to notions of substance and spatio-temporal fixity traditionally associated with textual (print) signification or with the logocentrism of representation attempted by conventional theatre. Ironically, in the notion of music/ text dialogue I propose here, music "means" through an increased awareness of the possibility of reference, while language slides closer to music through a disruption of the signified/ signifier binary.

As Thomson's music moves towards referentiality (to other easily recognizable musical languages), so does Stein's text move away from the impulse to refer and represent (her words rely more on sonority and sound than semantic definition). These apparently contradictory movements between the libretto and the score meet in the process of performance and shared modes of expression -- the music and the text overlap in the indeterminate production of meaning. The words and the music both operate by gesture and association, through dispersion and displacement, and in the continuous present. By moving outside conventional narrative structures of time, both language and music reveal themselves to be performative: constituted only in the fleeting now. By

offering a complicated series of repetitions, the text and the music reveal the nature of representation as inevitably deferring, never present, always changing. By making explicit reference to themselves and each other, the music and the text redirect the audience's attention from the outside to the inside of the work -- specifically to the work (the language, the music) as a *performed event*. This opera explores the relationship between music and text through its disruption of conventional signification in the libretto. By questioning the assumption of representation in language specifically and in theatrical narrative more generally, the libretto opens itself to alternative discourses, like movement, set design and, especially, music. The text's references to itself and its confusion of the static and dynamic nature of the image (landscape or scene) of the saint disrupt the forward momentum of linear narrative as well as its illusion of depth or representation. The music engages with the dynamic/ static quality of the text, and both of them rely on repetition and difference to maintain that cross- and self-referential dialogue. Repetition draws attention to the signifier, or to the discourse, while difference emphasizes the circulation of signification and the absence of absolute reference (or a transcendental signified). Thus, in the dispersion of language signification, in the disruption of narrative through reflexivity, in the representation of saints as landscape, in the quotation and manipulation of musical genres and clichés,

and in the conflicted subjectivity of a cubist-like portraiture, *Four Saints in Three Acts* is a site for conflict and exchange between discourses.

Language and Narrative

We can see the disruption of binary signification in Stein's libretto, as in her work generally, not only in her language puns (which are numerous) but also in her emphasis on aural rather than semantic associations between words. Language functions for Stein through difference rather than reference. The aural quality of Stein's writing initiates a movement of displacement through associative leaps. In her use of repetition and variation, Stein makes implicit associations between semantically dissimilar words. These associations draw attention to the sound, and indeterminacy, of language by disabling grammatical structures. Stein's prose maintains gestures towards a conventional syntax, but within that structure, sound overtakes sense. A passage from early on in the opera exemplifies this process: "It is very close close and closed. Closed closed to let letting closed close close close chose in justice in join in joining" (*Last Operas and Plays* 441). The passage (chosen rather arbitrarily) begins with a conventional structure, "it is very close", but the repetition of "close" forces the word into a shady grammatical zone between adjective and verb -- with part of speech only distinguishable by voice. Similarly the phrase "in justice" is easily misread (or mis-sung in

this case) as "injustice" thereby completely changing the meaning. "Close" finally mutates to "chose". While none of this word play has any easily accessible referential meaning, it does invite associations between words (closure, justice, choice) which are initiated by sound and in defiance of syntax. This slippage between words, based on aural difference, coupled with the punning potential of the libretto, allows a space for the music to engage with language as another flexible discourse.

At the level of narrative, as well as the level of the words, the libretto and the music engage in a similar disruption. In music, conventional narrative is achieved through thematic development, tonal conflict and resolution, and some adherence to generic forms. In theatre, characters serve to motivate the cause-effect chains of narrative which are neatly packaged in act and scene divisions; however, Stein's attempt to represent the "miraculous and extraordinary" lives of the saints "must invariably 'disrupt' the conventions of realism and narrative paradigms of conflict and resolution" (Blackmer "The Ecstasies" 126). In fact, one of the opera's preoccupations is the impossibility of faithful representation, or reference, so the fantastic disruption of narrative signals not only the mythical character of saints' biographies, but also the inadequacy of conventional language usage. Thus, one of the most subtle dialogues in *Four Saints* occurs at the level of narrative -- musical and dramatic. The music responds to the libretto's

generic confusion not only with its own confusion, but also with direct reference to the subject of the textual play. The opera libretto also actively disrupts the disciplinary boundaries of genre and conventional expectation. The title of *Four Saints in Three Acts* establishes a clear set of expectations for the audience: there will be four principal characters, three acts, and the distinction between four and three, between acts, between characters, will be maintained and relied upon for narrative structure. However, the opera disappoints these expectations and illustrates another possible understanding of the title: four saints and three acts are effectively interchangeable, four is not divided from three but *in* three and each disrupts the forward momentum, or the patterns of predictability, of the other. The convention of act division is disrupted through, among other techniques, the surprise introduction of a fourth act. The four saints are multiplied and divided so that the boundaries between individual identities become flexible and characters cease to operate, as in conventional theatre, as causal agents. The libretto's anxiety over this anti-generic situation is expressed in its continuous questioning of itself: "how many saints are there in it? How many acts are there in it?" And eventually the repetition becomes so excessive as to blur any distinction between acts or between saints, or between acts *and* saints. The saints are tableaux, staged icons -- effectively the saints *are* the acts and vice versa: "Saints shouldn't do anything. The fact that a saint

is there is enough for anybody. The *Four Saints* was written about as static as I could make it. The saints conversed a little, and it all did something. It did something more than the theatre which has tried to make events has done" ("How Writing is Written" in Scott 493).

The dialogue in *Four Saints* does not, as in conventional theatre, drive the narrative. The differences between characters are rendered minute and subtle by repetition of words and phrases and causality is suspended, replaced by a kind of minimalist linguistic evolution -- small changes in repetition. Thus, act divisions do not contain conflict or allow for resolution, and the play avoids narrative linearity and closure. The Prologue to the opera begins with a discussion of its own process of composition: "In narrative prepare for saints" (*LOP* 440). The acts and scene divisions serve to break up the flow of language but offer no narrative function. Instead, they offer a meta-disruption of narrative as the language disrupts syntax. The reflexive disruption of the act divisions is increased by Thomson's incorporation of these as dialogue, so the opera speaks its own process on stage. Act I is announced and then, fifteen or so lines later the injunction "Repeat First Act" is announced. The libretto announces again a page later: "Enact end of an act" (*LOP* 446). The contradiction introduced by this stage direction is complicated by the pun in the aural repetition of "enact" and "an act". The stage directions announce the activity of theatre but simultaneously make that activity

static by reducing it to an object ("an act"). At the same time, the injunctions to repeat set signification in motion ("enact") even if that motion is not linear. The noun "act" is not a verb "enact"; it is an object and not an activity. However, the paradox of language and of theatre is the activity of repetition that masquerades as representation.

Unlike the scene divisions in *Four Saints*, the act divisions can function conventionally, hinting at a conventional narrative framework: at the end of Act One, the chorus announces "Act Two", and in the Prologue to Act Four the chorus announces "Act Four". In spite of the repetitions, the act divisions are roughly chronological. However, an important function of this chronological consistency is to make a connection between the notion of the theatrical act as both object for contemplation and activity of repetition and as the characters of the saints themselves. After all, the opera has many more than four saints but it has, technically, only four *acts*. Thus, the acts serve to draw an explicit but flexible connection between the saints as characters within the acts and as acts themselves. That is, the saint is a static icon or character, but performed and thus an "act". The title then can be reinterpreted as four saints who are caught in three acts, in the act, acting. The notion that an act is a saint is explicitly stated at the end of Act One, which is dominated by St. Teresa, when the chorus sings, "This makes Saint Ignatius Act Two" (66). The implicit suggestion that the saint is an act and the act a

saint is dispersed throughout the opera in repetitions of words and syntactic structures. In the prologue to Act One, the *commère* asserts that "Three saints are never idle" and the section goes on to contrast three with four ("Begin three saints. Begin four saints."). This juxtaposition draws an implicit comparison between saints and acts (9). Later in the Prologue, the *compère* repeats "idle" but in the context of acts rather than saints:

> St. Plan: Why should everyone be at home.
>
> *Compère*: In idle acts.
>
> Chorus: Why should everyone be at home.
>
> *Compère*: In idle acts. (12)

The saints are acts and are never idle, but this is repeated with difference: "in idle acts". The paradox of "idle acts" once again introduces the variation on the static/ dynamic relationship of representation. The static/ dynamic paradox of the idle act characterizes the saint. Acts are idle: saints are in idle acts or acts are in idle saints. In their paradoxical impossibility, the divisions of the saints are compared with the divisions of acts: in the introduction of the two St. Teresas to one another (Act One), St. Teresa II wonders, "Can two saints be one" (39), and later in Act Two St. Teresa II wonders, "Could Four Acts be Three" (90). This preoccupation, the anxiety over numbers and proliferation, turns out to be an anxiety over subjectivity, representation and relationships:

Compère: How many saints in all.

Commère: How many acts are there in it.

. . .

Compère: When this you see you are all to me. Me which is you you who are true true to be you.

Commère: How many how many saints are there in it. (138)

The repeated musical setting for the *commère*'s dialogue makes the connection between saints and acts explicit as does the syntactic similarity. The *compère*'s dialogue is juxtaposed with the *commère*'s through contrasting music. Wondering how many saints/ acts are in the opera expresses a need to sort between acts and saints, establish distinction between each character and each act, and understand the circulation of character and act as progressive, linear and finite. In contrast, or in answer, connections between characters or speaking voices ("you", "me") operate as interchanges. Divisions between "you" and "me" are disrupted through the deferral of the pronoun "which" and thus the truth of distinct and separate subjectivity is a myth; instead, truth is shared/ sharing. Once again we see/ hear displacement in operation. "Which" refers us elsewhere/ when but that reference is caught out or jammed by the inevitable dispersion of the pronoun. If the saints are acts, then generic markers have no containment function. The saints exceed the parameters of theatre because they constitute its formal boundaries instead of being contained by them. This blurring of the artificial distinction between "form" and

"content" not only disrupts conventional narrative, but also makes the theatrical representation of an absent reality impossible. Signifiers refer to on-stage processes: like the cubist painting, Stein's text takes narrative languages, fragments them from their expected contexts, and turns them back on themselves. All signifiers, whether acts or words, exceed their boundaries by blurring the distinctions that allow each to operate as a discrete representational unit.

Using the voices of the French music hall figures, *commère* and *compère* (a borrowing which brings to mind Satie's use of the American Manager and French Manager in *Parade*), Thomson incorporates the stage directions and act and scene divisions into the sung and spoken text of the opera. Like the title, this technique draws attention to the materials and practices of the theatre, and such reflexivity both establishes expectations and disappoints them. The repetition of apparently random scene divisions points to the opera's internal workings of fictional or narrative form. At the same time, however, these scene divisions have little clear relation to the progression of the narrative. Thus, the very setting of the libretto focuses the audience's attention not on the forward momentum of a dramatic narrative, but on the opera itself as a constructed entity. Or rather, the setting of Stein's text draws attention to the theatre that is perpetually constructing itself in the eyes of its audience. The avoidance of chronology in the citation of scene divisions undermines any expectation of linearity

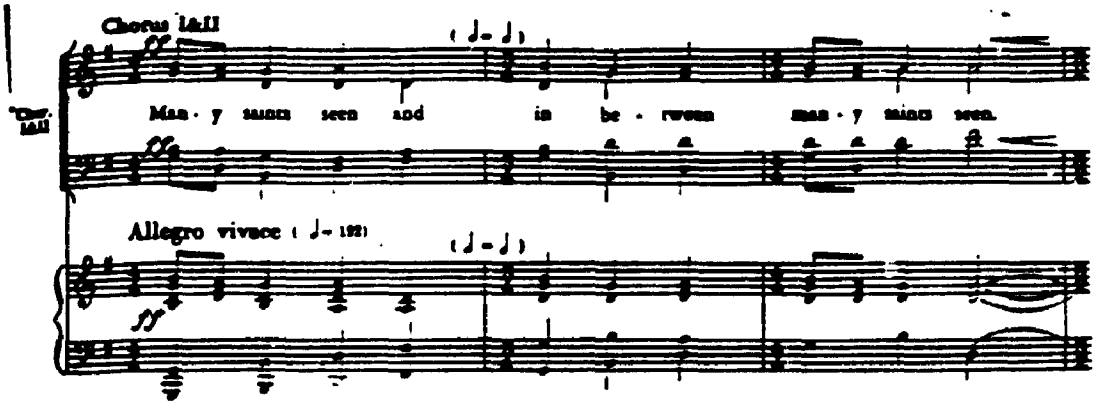
that might be aroused by their announcement. At the same time, the lack of dramatic "content" in each scene undermines any notion of depth in theatre. That is, the scene, rather than functioning as a container for character dialogue and cause/ effect events, is simply one text among others. There is no container/ contained, no deferred reality, no representation of anything other than the language of theatre itself. The opera is not deep and linear, but simply flat. As J. Garrett Glover suggests of *Les Six*'s theatre, the subject of *Four Saints* is it own canvas: "surfaces and materials [are] activated and manipulated so that object and field [interact] in space" (102). The object of study is fragmented into equal segments whose planes are juxtaposed with one another. One discursive or musical practice is not subsumed by another; rather, each is forced into circulation against the other -- no perspective, no direction.

In the "Love Scene,"[1] a duet between the *commère* and *compère*, the play between two- and three-dimensional representation is established within a linear context, which is then undermined in several ways. The *commère* sings the scene numbers beginning and ending with eight but moving chronologically from one to seven, while the *compère* accompanies her with scenic snippets. Each of the *compère*'s accompaniments rhymes with the preceding scene number, thereby establishing an immediate interaction between scene and "substance". And that interaction is on an aural level rather than a content level, highlighting the juxtapositions

of language practices (rather than transparent theatrical vehicles). In Maurice Grosser's and Thomson's interpretation, the language of love for the *commère* and *compère* is the language of theatre, and their sentimental intermingling (in the terms of conventional theatre) takes place here between opposed or differentiated languages of theatrical apparatus. The *compère*'s response to the *commère*'s scene designations are generally characterized by verbal structures, that is, by inactive verb structures like past participles, infinitives and imperatives. The sequence is framed with "Scene eight. To wait." Each repetition/ variation of this verbal motif encompasses a passive/ active characterization of scene. Activity is suggested but then arrested by being descriptive: "And begun. . . . Happily be. . . . Attached or" (86). Each scene is referred to as a tableau vivant or a shimmering still-life, and since the division between scene designation and the scene itself, signifier and signified, is increasingly blurred and mobile, the very notion of referentiality is disrupted. The "Love Scene" itself is a static/ dynamic moment, turning back on itself, waiting.

The scene serves as a dividing line between active spectacles and it is itself a passive spectacle or landscape. But it is constituted through the activity of seeing. The scene is seen. This pun recurs throughout the opera and it further destabilizes the dividing, containing, limiting function of the scene while keeping the notion of landscape

-- landscape activated by the gaze of the audience. Thus, the self-reflexivity implicates the audience as a necessary participant in the performance. At the end of Tableau III in Act One the *compère* announces "Scene two" and immediately following this announcement, chorus bursts in with "Many saints seen and in between many saints seen" (38-9) (figure 4.1). This juxtaposition of the scene designation with the



(fig. 4.1)

description of *Four Saints* suggests that the saints are constituted by being seen because they are constituted by being scene. The scene is "in between"; that is, scene numbers traditionally divide the narrative. Since "in between" is contrasted with the four-beat repetition of "Many saints seen" through the use of a disruptive triplet structure, the setting offers an interpretation for the dual nature of scene/ seen. The dividing line also constitutes the activity, the repetition of the activity. Three disrupts four but also links them, provides a dynamic continuity, as does the scene seen.

The scene/ seen motif is repeated three more times, and each is a variation on the other:

Compère: Scene one.

Chorus: This is a scene where this is seen. (59)

Chorus: Scene once seen once seen once seen. (65)

Chorus: Scene one.

St. Teresa I: And seen one. (102)

Once again, the announcement of the scene division, in the first and last examples, is followed by a description of scene as seen. In the first example the article distinguishes between the artifact ("is a scene") and the activity ("is seen") but the repetition of the pronoun reinscribes the fluidity between scene and seen. The first "this" refers to "a scene" but it also refers to the scene here, now, in performance. The second "this" can refer to the scene as seen (now, in performance), "a scene", and "this is a scene". The pronoun sets in motion an infinitely dispersed web of associations and the result is twofold: the notion of reference is brought into question while the distinction between scene and seen that has been established syntactically or grammatically is eroded. The distinction is at once maintained and reduced to nonsense setting up the dynamic/ static character of scene/ seen or landscape. The second two examples both question the notion of singularity even while they appear to establish it: scene/ seen one/ once in repetition are different even as they erase the notion of difference. Seen once is scene again.

Florine Stettheimer's sets and costumes for the first production constitute "the earliest instance of a painter of

repute designing for the American stage" (Harris 105)[2]. Literally, as the scene of the opera, its visual element, Stettheimer's sets use the stage as a canvas for the representation of contrasting textures, colours, and lighting. The deliberately synthetic and excessive set and costume design works to reinforce the notion of saint as scene -- or saint constructed through seeing. In the second tableau of Act One ("Saint Teresa being photographed") (figure 4.2), Stein's libretto refers to the photographs in a

(fig. 4.2)

shop on the Boulevard Raspail that inspired her characterizations of saints as landscape (discussed above in chapter 2). The nun/ saint's identity is established through successive repetition and subtle transformation, but this

repetition and transformation can only take place through the camera's act of seeing. Thus, the activity of watching is a constructive activity, not a representative activity. And the photograph is the activity; the transformation of the saint, the saint's act, is constructed through scene (static photograph) and being seen (the process of production). The second tableau, then, is a reflexive moment of seeing in which the saint is scene/ seen and thereby actively produced as a static icon. The cloth that covers the photographer in the tableau is an example of Stettheimer's play with light and texture: made of black lace (in reference to Spain, perhaps?) the cloth allows light through even as it obscures vision. Its folds, like the cellophane cyclorama, are substantial in texture but responsive to the play of light. The lace cloth draws attention to the very act of image construction by simultaneously providing a visual link between the camera and photographer and separating them, letting the light through. Saint Teresa's figure, "seated and not surrounded", is set off from the activity of the photographer, still and on a pedestal. Her figure is represented on-stage photographically, static and posed, and the scene becomes reflexive and activated by the act of taking the photograph. Saint Teresa only exists as seen but her scene is perpetually constructed through the activity of the photographer (a surrogate for the audience). The dove that she holds in one hand, in its activity, only serves to reinforce the ambiguity between the active/ static process of

her continual recreation. As well, the composition of this photograph itself (a publicity still taken for preperformance promotion) is reflexive, resembling the composition of Renaissance paintings which often represent an angelic chorus hovering in the margins.

Stettheimer's attitude towards light plays directly into this conception of scene as static but forever shifting. In the cyclorama for the production, she combines the ultra-modern cellophane backdrop with a distinctly baroque use of drapery (she insisted that none of the sets be painted). The "'Botticellophane'" (Harris 104) of the backdrop was designed to capture and reflect ambient light and had the effect at times of dazzling the audience. This use of light represented the radiance of the religious icon created by a public performance that is static, without linear movement, but internally dynamic and shifting. The image of Bernini's "St. Theresa in Ecstasy", reproduced in the program, serves as a kind of emblem for the performance.[3] That is, Stettheimer's sets were designed to reflect the notion of the saint as a fixed image which sets in motion uncontainable forces of subtle transformation. The light shifted constantly throughout the production, in colour, intensity and location and offered, in effect, a notion of dynamic, though physically stationary, drapery. That is, the drapery which typifies, for example, the Bernini statue gives the impression of arrested movement, being on the edge of transformation. The light in the cellophane cyclorama takes

this notion a step further: the "drapery" is a backdrop to the saints but it cannot contain the explosion of shifting light that sometimes even usurps the prominence of the figures on stage. Stettheimer's many struggles with the lighting director over the quality of light are well documented. She insisted that he produce a pure white light rather than the conventional white which is achieved through the mixing of the colours of the spectrum using various gels. Stettheimer claimed that the conventional light was really greyish and in order to achieve the brilliance she needed for performance, the lighting had to be pure. As a painter who rarely exhibited for fear of public failure, Stettheimer had a "dread of the myth that 'white light' marked out a fatal boundary-line between the art salon and the art gallery" (Tyler 50). Thus, white light is the distinct mark of the performative over the domestic, and it is a treacherous and ambiguous line to cross.

"Virgil Virgil Virgil"

Virgil Thomson's approach to Stein's text was idiosyncratic even in its conception. He reports in his autobiography *Virgil Thomson* that for the first time in his career he sat down at the piano and improvised the score, rather than starting by writing it out: "when the first act would improvise itself every day in the same way, I knew it was set" (104). Thus, from the beginning, *Four Saints* was a performative event. Thomson also claims in his autobiography

that the words carry the energy associated with music, latent, within them. He brings that dynamic alive in the act of composition:

> What gave this work so special a vitality? The origin of that lay in its words, of course, the music having been created in their image. Music, however, contains an energy long since lost to language, an excitement created by the contest of two rhythmic patterns, one of lengths and one of stresses. . . . together, and contrasted, they create tension and release; and this is the energy that makes music sail, take flight, get off the ground. By applying it to the text of Gertrude Stein, I had produced a pacing that is implied in the text, if you wish, but that could never be produced without measured extensions. Speech alone lacks that forward thrust (*VT* 105).

Thus, duration (continuity) and emphasis (demarcation) mime a process Thomson saw already existing in the libretto -- but inaccessible ir text (i.e., print) form. The tension between length and stress offers, in Thomson's view, an alternative dynamic energy of performance. This musical performance also serves the semantic needs of the text insofar as it offers an implicit, and inevitable, interpretation: "My theory was that if a text is set correctly for the sound of it, the meaning will take care of itself. And the Stein texts, the prosodizing in this way, were manna. With meanings already abstracted, or absent, or so multiplied that choice among

them was impossible, there was no temptation toward tonal illustration" (*VT* 105). Yet interpretation is not representation. That is, Stein's text, Thomson implies, is already musical in that it refuses explicit meaning production -- the music and the text share the same operation of meaning production. In this same book, Thomson comments on the accessibility of his score, its unfashionable diatonic tonality: he denies "the assumption that discord is advanced and harmoniousness old fashioned. Not even the contrary is true. . . . The truth is that only artists greedy for quick fame choose musical materials for their modishness. In setting Stein's texts to music I had in mind the acoustical support of a trajectory, of a verbal volubility that would brook no braking" (106). Thomson's attention is focused on activating the specific modernity of Stein's text by enacting the performative musical world of the libretto. In the process he created a style which would prefigure the Minimalist composers of the second half of this century.

John Cage's biography of Thomson's musical output describes his opera *The Mother of Us All*, also using a Stein libretto, in terms of its indeterminacy of structure but makes the point that his comments could be applied equally well to the music of *Four Saints*. Cage says: "the tonality structure of the entire work is classic in architecture. . . . But this argument would not report the listener's actual experience: he [sic] hears at a given point a particular tonality of which the statement is entirely transparent; from

such a position in tonal space he [sic] may be transported to any other position -- an experience that is anything but classic; it is proper to a period of aviation and space travel" (Hoover and Cage 202-203). Cage plays up the indeterminacy of Thomson's style to something of an extreme in the following comment: "No attempt to grasp *Four Saints* will take hold of it. To enjoy it one must leap into that irrational world from which it sprang, the world in which the matter of fact and the irrational are one" (157). Cage suggests that *Four Saints* defies analysis, the implication being that it is essentially simple and enjoyable but without substance. However, in looking at other of Thomson's adaptations of Stein's texts, Cage provides some useful insights which can be applied to the music of *Four Saints*. In discussing *Capital, Capitals*, Cage points out the static nature of Stein's text and the way in which Thomson echoes it in his music. He suggests that the beginning and ending of the piece (in C major -- *Four Saints* begins and ends in F major) seem "to be announcing that something is about to happen. The fact that the piece takes a long time to accomplish nothing is the secret of its strength and effectiveness. Thomson had again observed Gertrude Stein's work from a distance, but instead of concerning himself with its intellectual characteristics, he had observed its form -- the expressiveness of its continuity, which is static rather than progressive" (145).

As a predominantly tonal composer, Thomson followed the lead of *Les Six*, particularly Satie. Thomson was focused on the Parisian music scene partly because he, like many other prominent American composers of his generation, was drawn to study with Nadia Boulanger, but also because "Paris was the only place in which he could remain free of the Germanic influence in modern music (including serialism, which he found to be 'a combination of the progressive and the retrogressive in a most uncomfortable proportion')" (Tischler 100). Along with the composers of *Les Six*, Thomson reacted against German music, finding it, from Wagner on, to be "self centered, self-regarding and self-indulgent" (*VT* 117). In his critical capacity, Thomson was an apologist for these French composers. Glenn Watkins discusses Thomson's musical preferences in his reading of a Thomson article from 1941: Thomson dismisses "Schoenberg's music as 'the purest Romantic chromaticism'; . . . Hindemith and Stravinsky as Neoclassicists with ears like Brahms, 'glued firmly to the past'; . . . [which] led not surprisingly to the conclusion that because of its renunciation of the impressive and the heroic, 'The Satie music aesthetic is the only twentieth-century musical aesthetic in the Western World'" (Glenn Watkins 454). Many critics have made note of Thomson's interest in and similarity in style to the French avant-garde of the early nineteen-twenties. In his autobiography, Thomson himself describes the impact that Satie had on his music, suggests that Satie's style is the epitome of "inside

twentieth centuryness" and compares the enjoyment of Satie with the enjoyment of Gertrude Stein: "People take to Satie or they don't, as to Gertrude Stein" (*VT* 64). Clearly he took to both. Discussing Satie's influence on Thomson, Randy Neighbarger points to the parallels between Stein's work and the work of the cubists (26) but also between Stein's and Satie's work: "Just as Stein's writing does not progress along a narrative time line, Satie's music eschews developmental processes. Satie frustrates the linear quality of his music with the repetition of short melodic, accompanimental, and rhythmic figures" (27). Neighbarger points to the obvious stylistic similarities between Satie and *Four Saints* -- diatonic harmony, simple melodic repetitions, little counterpoint -- but goes on to note the American influence of church music and nursery rhymes. Even the orchestration of *Four Saints* appears to have significance in relation to Satie and American culture: "The accordion comes from the [French] cabaret, the reed organ from the [American] country church" (33).

Stein and Thomson are both connected stylistically through their interest in the project of cubism and its influence on the other arts. As Americans in Paris, they both reacted against German art and music movements which they saw as mere extensions of a dominative Romantic ideology. In opposition to the complexity of atonality and the aspiration to depth in the German art of the period, both Stein's and Thomson's work sought out the playful

fragmentation, repetition and flat juxtaposition that characterized French art and music. Both sought out methods of composition that used a familiar language but reduced it to its processes. Like cubist paintings, the works of both Stein and Thomson parody familiar materials through quotation and juxtaposition, and through an avoidance of pretensions to depth. In their attitudes towards representation, they emphasized the canvas as its own subject rather than a mirror to an outer reality. Every element in their works is necessarily superficial and, thus, reflexive. By means of reflexivity, among other techniques, Stein and Thomson question the utility of notions of reference or representation in the language of art.

Mutual reference: language and music

Four Saints undermines representation and is defined as "static process" rather than progressive narrative through its self-reference. It is primarily reflexive in subject matter since, according to Thomson, it is about "the working artist's working life" (*VT* 90). Further, *Four Saints* is an opera referring to its own process of composition. As Jane Bowers suggests, "Stein asserts the substantiality of her written text and makes it an active participant, as it were in the process of its own enactment" (34). Through the voices of the characters, particularly the *commére* and *compére*, we hear the preoccupations of the text: "how many saints are there in it?" "how many scenes are there in it?"

and so on. Adding to the textual self-reference, the music supports or interprets moments of the libretto, offering variations on the conventions that have themselves been set out and varied in Stein's text. And the score itself is also largely self-referential. It points repeatedly at the materials of its own construction -- both through allusions to popular musical forms and, more basically, by quoting the components of tonal Western harmonic structures: the seven-note scale, the chord, the contrasts of tension and resolution (though both are steadfastly resisted).

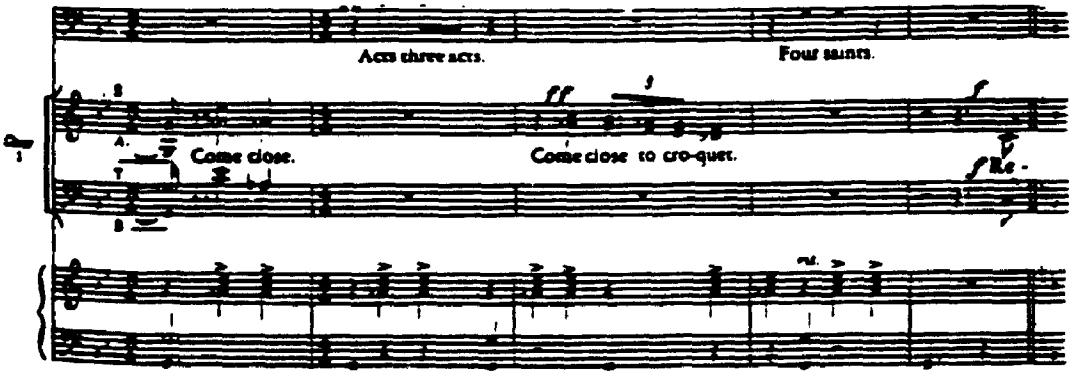
As well as engaging in refashioning of conventional narrative (discussed above), the title of *Four Saints in Three Acts* points to the opera's questioning of generic boundaries, in both its own construction as a theatre piece and in its use of musical paraphrase and quotation. Number play in the opera, particularly with fours and threes, contributes to the reflexivity and the active/ passive oscillation that characterizes *Four Saints*. Thomson's incorporation of Stein's stage directions into the music for the *commére* and *compére* points simultaneously to the process of performance and the process of composition. As well, the explicit relationship the characters draw between the staged spectacle and the activity of watching, the audience's voyeurism, calls into question conventional conceptions of the audience as passive, and more to the point, of the players/ play as active. Further, the play on numbers in *Four Saints* allows for a self-reference of the music that not

only highlights the materials and means of the music's composition but also draws attention to the lack of conventional narrativity in the music, and offers an implicit ideological explanation for that lack.

The title suggests the narrative or generic confusion of the characters and the acts, and this confusion opens up the apparently discrete power relations between form and content. That is, the boundaries that discipline narrative, between the characters and the segmentation of dialogue into acts and scenes, dissolve under the pressure of reflexive number-play (with threes and fours). In Thomson's setting, the music plays with this merging of three and four initiating a similar disruption of generic or formal boundaries or expectations. That is, Thomson makes reference to two conventional musical forms, the waltz and the march. By referring to various modes of musical discourse, Thomson establishes the listener's expectations for a musical narrative: the introduction and development of theme or themes through conflict and resolution. The waltz and the march specifically establish an apparently unalterable rhythmic expectation which is tied to particular gestural conventions: dance and military step. Furthermcre, the one maintains a repetitive three-part rhythm, the other a four-part rhythm. Though the (fragmented) statement of each theme, independent of the other, recurs in the opera, Thomson often plays the elements of one off of those of the other. In many statements of the march theme, triplet structures are

introduced and in the waltz rhythmic units of fours disrupt the momentum of the dance. As Cage has observed, Thomson uses the juxtaposition of rhythms, particularly dance rhythms, in many other works besides *Four Saints*, "first to collapse and then spread out the melody beyond the bounds of expectation" (Hoover and Cage 133).

In the Prologue to Act One (*Four Saints* 17) (figure 4.3), the Chorus alternates with the *Compère*: "Come close./ Acts three acts./ Come close to croquet./ Four saints." And the accompaniment is a waltz which begins in 3/4 time but

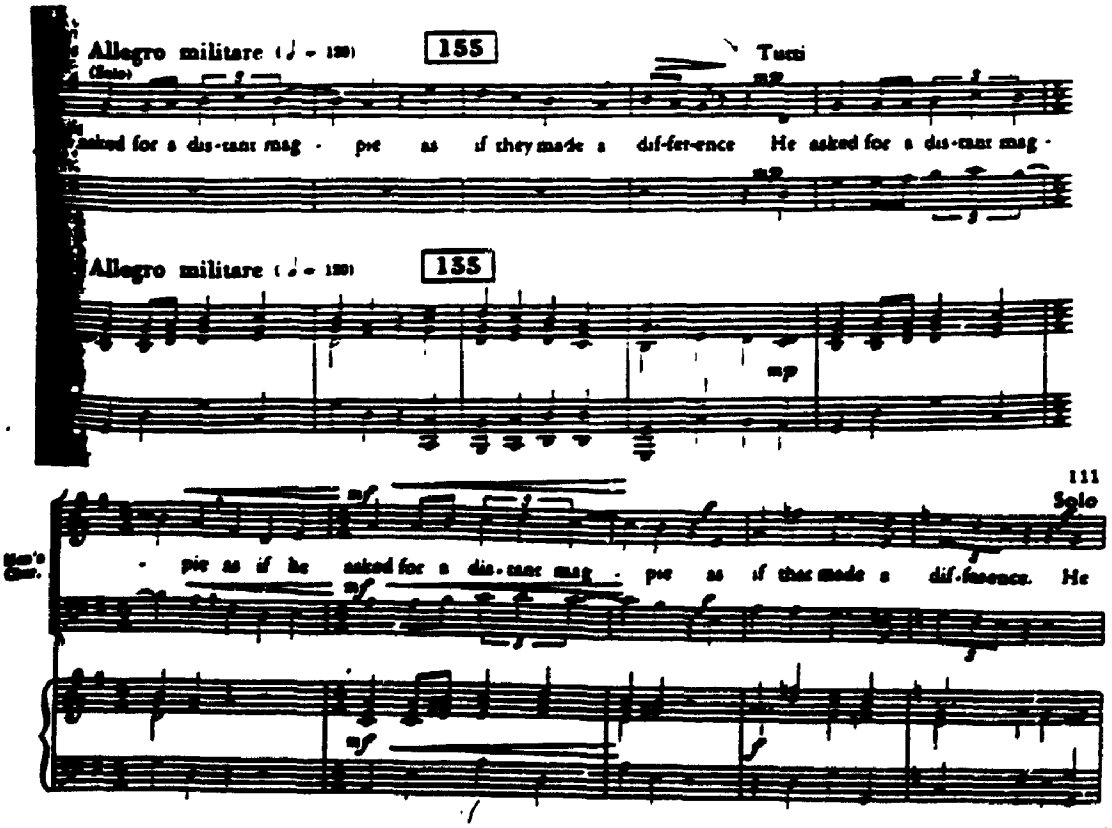


(fig. 4.3)

after one bar shifts into 4/4. Thus, the rhythmic downbeat of the waltz pattern actually falls on the second and third beats of the following bars. The accompanying melodic fragments fall on the second beat of each 4/4 measure and the second, third and first beats of the repeated waltz rhythm. Forcing the waltz rhythm into a 4/4 measure bar ensures that any accompaniment in 4/4 will work with the three-part waltz but also conflict with it. The accompanying melody lags

behind, or pushes ahead, impossible to say which, and this wrench in the rhythmic machinery destabilizes the narrative expectations of the music. By disrupting the forward momentum of the waltz with the announcement of the opera's subject, Thomson's setting provides a gestural mechanism for the suggested ambiguity of the title. The waltz in 4/4 motif recurs throughout the opera even to the last (see, for example, page 144 of the score, four bars after rehearsal number 214). The march too is altered (though less often than the waltz).

In the "Vision of the Holy Ghost" section of Act Three (page 110, two bars before rehearsal number 155) (figure4.4),



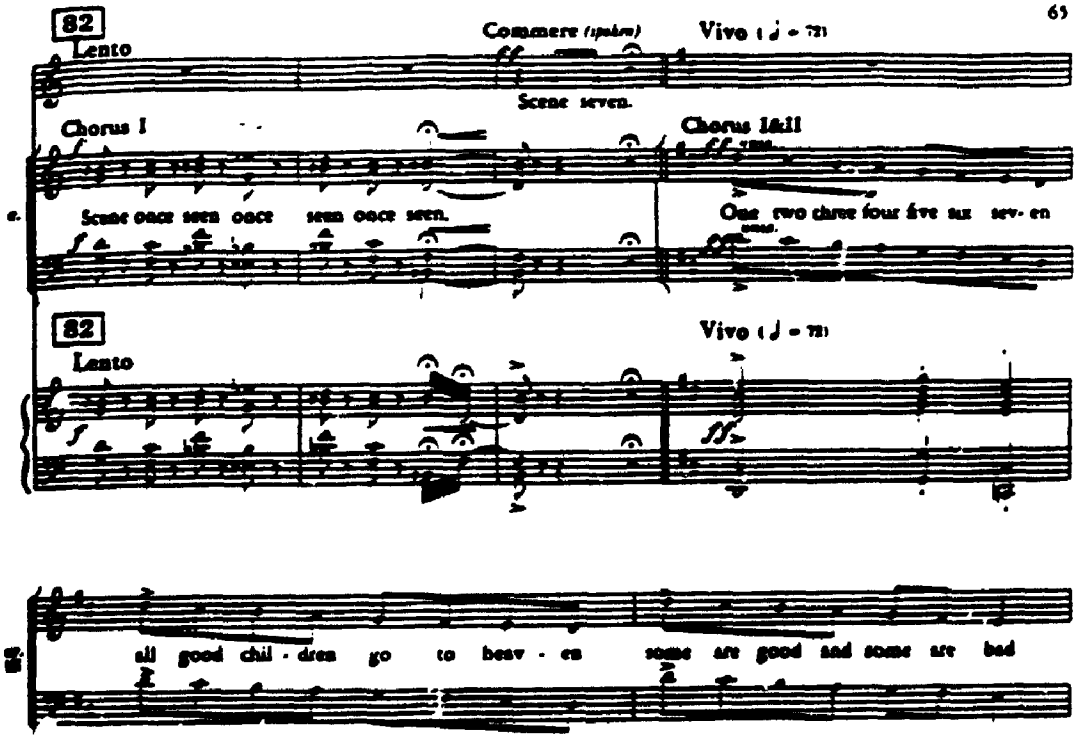
(fig. 4.4)

the march theme is slightly disrupted by the introduction of a triplet crossing over the bar-line, tied to the quarter-

note downbeat of the next bar. In the second statement of the march theme, the triplet is tied again to the down beat of the next bar, but that bar changes time signatures to 5/4 (as opposed to 4/4), further altering the expectations associated with the march: military regularity, predictable phrase structures and cadences. This momentary step out of line responds to a syntactic repetition in the text. The first statement of the march theme here accompanies "He asked for a distant magpie as if that made a difference". But as the theme shifts in and out of 5/4 the line reads: "He asked for a distant magpie as if he asked for a distant magpie as if that made a difference". The repetition of the line's beginning calls for a reinscription of the theme, but that reinscription comes at the expense of the rhythmic regularity of the march. The verbal structures circle back on themselves, beginning again, and in response the musical structures also waver in their direction and distinction. The "difference" is made through repetition, the acting of three in four.

Just as generic markers for drama ("acts") are drawn into and exchanged with dramatic "content" ("saints"), and just as three combines confusingly with four, so too does music become incorporated into Stein's planar landscape. Musical discourses become signifiers capable of representation, but Thomson treats musical discourses much as Stein treats language or generic discourses, as objects in juxtaposition with other objects -- snippets cut-out and

repeated. As discussed above, the word "scene" in this opera has multiple differing associations. It can mean landscape as well as act division. Or rather scene (act division) and scene (landscape) are substituted for each other. Scene must be a category extended to the musical world of the opera if we are to see the music, language and spectacle to be self-creating and in dialogue with one another. In an example of musical self-reference, Thomson's score suggests that music is landscape, created through listening, static and dynamic. In reference to its own process of production as a meaningful mode of expression, music constitutes itself as scene. In Tableau VIII we see the announcement of "scene seven" (65) (figure 4.5). So in the following few bars we have not only



(fig 4.5)

the arbitrarily assigned act division, but the *landscape* of "seven": "one, two, three, four five six seven" are all set

to the seven pitches of a descending diatonic scale though this number is further disrupted by the setting which actually includes eight notes through repetition. The repetition of the nursery rhyme "all good children go to heaven" with the variation "some are good and some are bad" suggests an arbitrary cruelty, which generally goes unspoken, in popular church culture. And this oblique commentary is framed with the reiteration of the seven-note scale. Thus, the score and the libretto together offer a connection between the "landscape" of diatonic harmony and the domination inherent in Christian liturgy. As we saw in Edward Said (in Chapter One), the harmony of tonic to tonic has a policing function, as do the notions of heaven and hell, good and bad. However, since the libretto in fact relies on the diatonic "culture" for its source of parody, this connection is inherently playful. As the libretto pokes fun at its own origins so does the music, and in this very act they effect a transformation. By repeating each in the context of the other they blow apart the notion of fixed, symbolic, not to say binary, meanings. By stating the law in the voice of the other, they defy that law or discipline.

With his employment of a specific musical discourse, the seven-note scale of diatonic harmony, Thomson makes use of Stein's play with numbers in the opera. The number anxiety that characterizes her text's preoccupation with its own excesses ("how many saints?" "how many acts?") opens musical discipline to question as well. The scene of seven, the

seven-note diatonic scale, is a place in which, among many other things, the ideology of the church resides. In its assumption of regularity, domination of tonal structure, need for control and predictability, this method of tonal organization is associated by Thomson with Stein's language associations. This interaction between text and music is reinforced and varied in repetition. In Act Two, after the "Dance of the Angels" section, between rehearsal numbers 102 and 104 (80-81) the scene of seven is associated with an anxiety over permanence:

> Chorus I: Never to be lost again today to stay.
>
> Chorus II: Saint Ignatius Saint Ignatius Saint Ignatius temporarily.
>
> St. Plan: Who makes whose be his. I do.
>
> Chorus I and II: Saint Teresa scene scene seven one two three four five six seven.
>
> St. Teresa II: Let it have a place.(80-81).

The need for an established place is simultaneous with a need for a permanent expression of the saint. And this representation is associated with the scene of tonal harmony -- this predictable language of clear expectations established and fulfilled is a landscape for the saint. The saint is the landscape of seven. At the same time, however, we are reminded of Stein's assertion that landscapes "go away to stay" ("Plays" 81); that is, representation is always absent from itself. This process of deferral characterizes the representation of the saint particularly since it is born

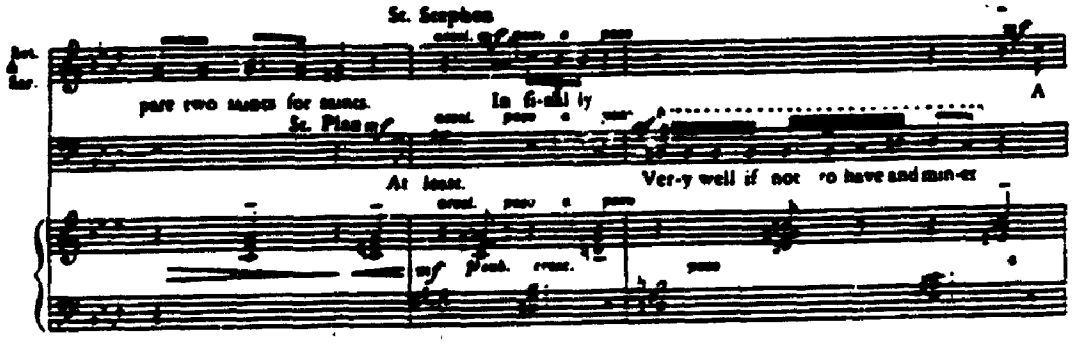
of this very anxiety for presence and fixity and reveals the attempt at reproduction and stability to be vain. Instead, it is process -- a scene produced to be seen.

In Thomson and Stein's play with genre, musical narrative and dramatic narrative overlap. A very large example of self-reference is also an example of the use of a conventional form to disrupt convention. Thomson both invites and then disappoints narrative expectations associated with the conventions of Italian opera: "I thought we should follow overtly, however, the format of classical Italian opera, which carries on the commerce of the play in dry recitative, extending the emotional moments into arias and set pieces" (*VT* 90-91). Aria-recitative structure in conventional opera is a specific narrative device: the aria offers a musical interlude to please and delight, when plot is more or less suspended, whereas recitative serves to propel the narrative by focusing on dialogue and interactions between characters. However, in *Four Saints* no such *narrative* distinctions exist though the formal markers of aria-recit structure persist. That is, the musical structure makes reference to the function of conventional narrative but empties those structures of their function. The music carries an implicit narrative association but refuses to fulfill its expectations. Thus, the self-reference of the music highlights the absence of conventional narrative in the text.

The score is self-referential in two ways: it puns on the text, and it makes reference to itself without words, simply by baldly giving expression to its own materials. The puns on the text enact a dialogue between modes of expression, showing each to be performative and ambiguous in reference. Throughout Stein's text, the word-pun has served to exemplify Stein's notion of repetition: "remembered as knew" (140). That is, the pun like the repeated word is both known and new, carrying more than one implication and offering both implications at once to play off one another. The pun dialogues with itself and refuses to resolve its own differences, but Stein's puns can open up the dialogue beyond the limits of the word. That is, her puns cross the white spaces that mark one word, or discursive space, off from another: "Saint Teresa knowing young and told" (25). Following Garrett Stewart's example, I would suggest that the aural slippage between the "d" of "and" and the "t" of "told" unsettles the notions of fixed textual difference which limits and defines semantic distinctions. Further, the very performative, listenable nature of this slippage undermines the privilege of the written libretto as sole possessor of meaning. Instead, language-text begins a slippery slide through the voice and the ear into music-text.

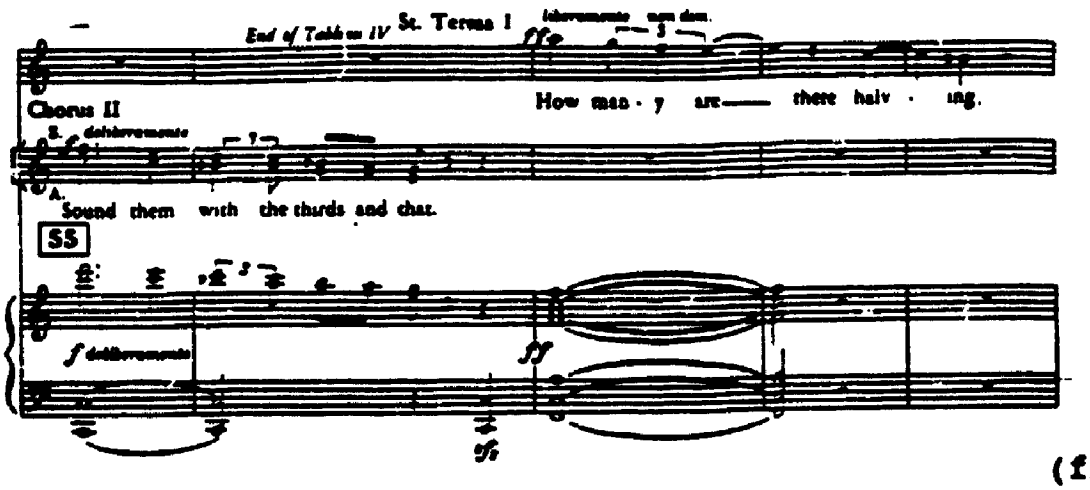
The musical puns in the opera, music which directly refers to the language of the libretto, also engage in this slide from completely textual signification of language to the aural signification of music but introduce another voice

into this already dialogic text. Music reveals, through the pun, its capacity to refer, to mean, and at the same time reveals the text's capacity to disperse meaning (though not end it altogether). Near the very beginning of the opera, we hear a setting which not only puns on the text but opens up the punning potential of the word itself. In the line "Very well if not to have and miner" (2), Thomson accompanies the



(fig. 4.6)

last word with an a-minor chord (figure 4.6). Although the text does not suggest that "miner" is a pun through verbal context, the music adds a new element of meaning dimension by referring to a second meaning, "minor". In a sense this musical contextualisation refers backwards as well, since the listener would not necessarily know that the word in the libretto is spelt "-er" rather than "-or". Thus the music invites the language pun undetectable in the score. At number 55, end of Tableau IV (44) (figure 4.7), "Sound them with the thirds and that" is set with major and minor thirds. This music/ word pun also unsettles the signifying potential of language and it too crosses disciplinary boundaries: it sets in motion a musical reference and a semantic reference



(fig. 4.7)

at once. The music in these examples is not simply illustrating by association, it is in dialogue with the text. To borrow an idea from Carolyn Abbate, the music is literally, physically, a voice in the text.

The voice inhabits the word and multiplies it, or voice and word exchange material associations, and this exchange once again introduces the process or activity of displacement. The process that characterizes the scene is also and at the same time found in music. Thus, the score can establish the notion of musical scene as a paradox: music as spectacle. That is, as Said suggests, music can be a limiting and limited tool, an attempt to express an unambiguous authority. The spectre of functional harmony and conventional tonal development as a limited and contained discourse is undermined, as is the notion of a limiting spectacle in the opera, through self-reference. In pointing to its own materials of construction, tonal harmony reveals itself as uncontainable process rather than fixed representation.

Though he uses it as evidence for the impossibility of analysis, John Cage has pointed out the recurrence of self-referential musical materials: "111 tonic-dominants, 178 scale passages, 632 sequences, 38 references to nursery tunes, and one to 'My Country 'Tis of Thee'" (157). As well as the scale passages and tonic dominants already noted, the musical self-reference, particularly to the materials of the diatonic harmonic system, is reinforced by the arpeggio "warm-up" passages repeated throughout the opera and by the ascending major seventh arpeggio that sometimes introduces a new section, but without resolution. Chords, scales, preparations are all reduced to clichés in the language of this opera. The elements of music are laid bare and pounded into the listener as Stein's words are condensed, reduced and repeated to make their constitution rather than their representation foremost in the listener's ear. The quotations and clichés of different musical genres are varied in their own ways as well. The variations they undergo, in repetition, avoid any structuring function. Instead these variations question the generic conventions that the repetition introduces. By creating musical disjunctions in these repetitions of meaningful and accessible generic forms, Thomson plays with the very notions of fixity in music that Stein questions in language. Each comments on the processes of the other.

The reliance of Thomson's score on cliché for its sense of parody illustrates the nature of *musical* reference in this

opera. The music refers simply by quoting or parodying established languages and of course by referring to itself, its own materials of construction. In the libretto the self-referential moments point to the constructed nature of spectacle, and thus to the absence of a referential outside to the theatre's inside; the theatre is its own representation, and language, as an element of theatre, relies on a process of deferral, dispersion and association for signification. The self-referential nature of the music of *Four Saints* seems to provide a similar model to that of the libretto and the theatre, but more than an analogy, the music interacts with the scenic processes of the staging and the language to reveal the representation of art across disciplines as a process of repetition with a self-conscious difference. Cadences for example function like act and scene divisions to establish expectations of closure and/ or anticipation, but those expectations are often thwarted. Cadences in the opera, especially when accompanied by a drum roll, inhabit the same ambiguous middle ground as the act divisions, suggesting a function but empty of conventional content. The seventh-chord arpeggio sections which sound like warm-up exercises draw attention to the formal restrictions of the conventions of diatonic harmony. Any tonal setting is governed by progressions of intervals of a third, the same progress as the arpeggio. As well, reference to the conventions of the rehearsal once again points to the opera as a performance in itself, not as some abstract

representation of a concrete truth existing outside itself. In a sense, the singing is the perpetual preparation and beginning that the Prologue to Act One refers to.

The quotation of specific musical genres is similar to the quotation of the materials of diatonic composition itself. As in Stein's conception of language, every musical element is a repetition which carries its memories of past repetitions with it even as the context makes it new. Language and music as cultural expressions are always quotations of themselves. Thus, Stein's and Thomson's quotation of "My country 'Tis of Thee" is a direct statement of the anthem but a fragment. In the context of the opera, preceded as it is by "Four saints an opera in three acts" set to the descending scale motif, the snippet of anthem draws on the associations of patriotism and affirmative spectacles of authority. It is an ironic statement of Americana, and it invites participation of the opera in a popular tradition, but a tradition that has been fragmented and juxtaposed. Other conventions, such as the waltz and the march already discussed, are used for their associations in popular culture but also altered and rendered variable. The waltz theme which begins the Prologue to the opera stays in its conventional 3/4 time for only a few bars before mutating through 4/4 and 5/4 times. In a statement of the waltz theme which retains its triple rhythm (Tableau III, 38), the unified fragment functions in a similar way to the anthem snippet -- as an ironic juxtaposition. Similarly, tne

recurring march theme suggests the regimented security of the military, but it too undergoes various subtle transformations which unsettle what should be the most regimented and dependable rhythmic convention of all.

The recurrent quotations of plain chant establish one aspect of the liturgical flavour of the opera, but they also underline the connection between the rituals and representations of the church and the narrative conventions of the opera. Since the recitative, also based around a single tone or step-wise intervalic movements, is designed to propel narrative in the Classic Italian opera, its merging with the chant convention suggests that the performance of the sacred is formally simultaneous with the performance of narrative. However, neither the expectations of narrative nor those of plain chant ritual are fulfilled, leaving the forms to carry their own significance. These conventions emptied of expectations again express the notion that saints are performed and constructed icons, not representations of some real world. The quotations of the tango and the American hymn tune also bring in references to the diverse musical discourses of Thomson's experience. The tango is reinforced as the language of dance, but ironically relieved of its intensity. The traditional frenetic and melodramatic 'latin' flavour of the tango is minimized, and thus the conventional language of the dance is emphasized through figure movement but undermined through the section's comparative lack of urgency. The hymn tunes are introduced

in the songs of the saints and provide a large measure of justification for the diatonic harmonies, but at the same time, a unified statement of a complete hymn or hymn-like passage is continuously thwarted. Instead, these melodic fragments are altered and repeated as the dialogue of the saints is altered and repeated.

Overall, the formal structure of the Intermezzo before the Prologue to Act Four is a good illustration of Thomson's musical procedure throughout the opera. It repeats many of the musical quotations and imitations contained in the opera, but it deconstructs them all rhythmically and tonally. This telescoping action creates practically the only sustained moments of dissonance in the entire score. In this section, as in much of the opera, Thomson introduces an authoritative musical line which never reaches its expected point of conventional development. For example, the drum roll and waltz that open the first and fourth acts of the opera carry the associations of beginnings and anticipation, but instead of being developed or resolved, they are repeated throughout the scene and then the opera. Thomson's musical inventions move through chromatic variations and repetitions with slightly altered rhythms, harmonies, and/ or melodic structures, but they never modulate, with thematic variations, through the appropriate keys, returning to their initial statement for resolution. Eventually, every statement trails off as diatonically, though not as authoritatively, as it began and a new section begins.

Though many elements are repeated in the opera they never achieve the status of structuring variations (in the Western Classical tradition) because the changes are too minute and apparently tonally random. This is a score which, like its libretto, proposes an energetic and attractive trip with no single destination. It focuses all its attention on the processes of production, the performance of language and music.

Scenic subjectivity: saints and portraiture

The production of *Four Saints* was scenically marked as portraiture even in the program notes for the Broadway production. After the title page, the first image is Bernini's "Saint Teresa in Ecstasy", the sculptural construction of a moment of fluidity. Following this picture is Carl Van Vechten's introduction "How I Listen to Four Saints in Three Acts" in which he suggests that listening can also be looking:

> If the auditor demands a plot he [sic] will be disappointed, but why should he [sic] demand a plot? It is like looking at a painting and demanding a story. . . . Are theatre-goers more naïve than picture viewers? Besides, to compensate for the lack of a story in the accepted sense, there is abundant action, action which is witty, beautiful, suggestive, and full of entrancing double meaning (3).

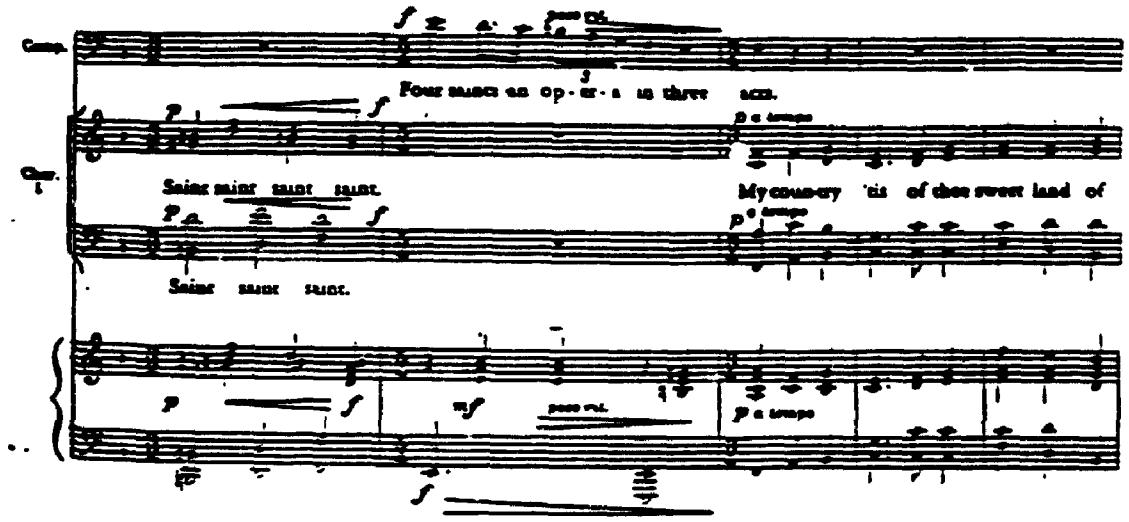
In the passage, Van Vechten collapses the distinction between the activity of listening and watching, and suggests that though plotless and static like a painting, the opera is also full of activity and doublings. Then follow four pages of cross-disciplinary portraiture: "Portrait of Gertrude Stein by Christian Bérard" (5), "Musical Portrait of Gertrude Stein by Virgil Thomson" (6), "Portrait of Virgil Thomson by Gertrude Stein" (7), "Portrait of Virgil Thomson by Christian Bérard", and "Portrait of Virgil Thomson by Kristains Tonny" (8). The scene as it is linked to conceived notions of representation is not, in fact, a mirror to the world but instead an invitation to the viewer/ listener to take part in its processes. Instead of narrative coherence, the attempt at fixed reproduction of the sitter, the portrait offers "abundant action". The action is produced by the listener/ viewer's investment of association in the juxtapositions of fragmented quotations before him or her. Each quotation plays on a received convention simply through its ability to evoke association, in repetition, and thus invites an expectation (desire) which is never satisfied but is instead transferred to the next fragment (displaced).

The program's emphasis on the portrait, the static spectacle constructing the subject, serves to introduce the audience to the main preoccupation of the opera, and brings into play the collaborators' various, but similar, attitudes towards representation in the portrait. In Florine Stettheimer's portraits "the person -- or better the *persona*

-- was composed of decor as much as of himself [sic]" (Tyler 55). Though her paintings were not cubist in style, Stettheimer's attitude towards portraiture was similar to the cubist incorporation of the figure with its surroundings. Similarly, the baroque excesses of set design, costumes and props are presented not as a background for the action to take place in front of, but as extensions of character, or, on the other hand, character is a stage object like any other. The inner life of the character does not exist; instead, the elements of the construction of the performing subject are put into circulation on stage. For Virgil Thomson, musical portraiture was the epitome of his compositional method, "the discipline of spontaneity" (Thommasini x). The sitter for the portrait inspires the activity of composition. The portrait is not a representational medium but a compositional or improvisatory act. For Gertrude Stein, the portrait in language is removed from any sense of explicit representation, and once again, the activity of composition is foremost.

As Marjorie Perloff and others have suggested, Stein's approach to character is much like Picasso's approach to the portrait. Subjectivity is for Stein the performance of a collection of various intersecting and conflicting discourses. Judith Butler has proposed, as I discussed in chapter one, that character, or more specifically gender, is performed by the subject rather than being constituted in some mysterious and ahistorical inner psychic space. Stein,

like the cubists, also represents gendered subjectivity as a surface suspension of snippets or tokens of gender. The juxtaposition and fragmentation of these snippets create the "characters" in *Four Saints*, and these characters, like a cubist portrait or collage, vibrate with disjunction. They shift planar relations, reorganize representative discourse. Just as Picasso's and Braque's portraits often merge their human subjects with their backgrounds, *Four Saints* resists the separation of identity or subjective discretion. And just as Picasso or Braque incorporated many "found" objects into their collages, the Stein/ Thomson collaboration allows for a cross-over between musical and linguistic discourses. Each becomes representative of a loose representation of gender, and each refers to the activity of the other. The delineation of character is associated with differentiation, and, as we have seen, a rigid notion of difference is systematically questioned throughout this opera. Thus, even while characters are associated with distinct discursive positions, they are merged, fractured and repeated. The Prologue to Act One announces the divisions between saints in the libretto: "Four saints born in separate places" (19). However, the music, perhaps in conflict with the libretto, perhaps anticipating its later confusion of saints, undermines that division as Thomson set the repetition of "saint saint saint saint" in a two-part, overlapping chorus section (figure 4.8). The upper voices repeat "saint" four times, the first and last repetition having quarter-note



(fig. 4.8)

values and the middle two having half-note values (the bar is in 3/2). The lower voices repeat "saint" three times in three straight half-notes. Thus, once again, the three interrupts the four (lower interrupts upper), blurring apparently clear distinctions in articulation and in numbers, and the four interrupts the three in upsetting a metrically predictable line (3/2). The saints are not only blurred but split, Thomson having divided the part of Saint Teresa into two[4], playing on the line "how many are their halving" which is itself a pun playing on the opera's continual expression of number anxiety (how many saints are there in it). This play between blurring subject distinctions and fragmenting the subject is contained in one of many puns: "Saint Teresa left in complete" (55). Thomson's setting underlines the ambiguity of character or subject representation with the introduction of an eight-note rest between "in" and "complete". The word is itself incomplete and yet by separating these two words, the alternative reading, that Saint Teresa is left in wholeness, is introduced. Saint

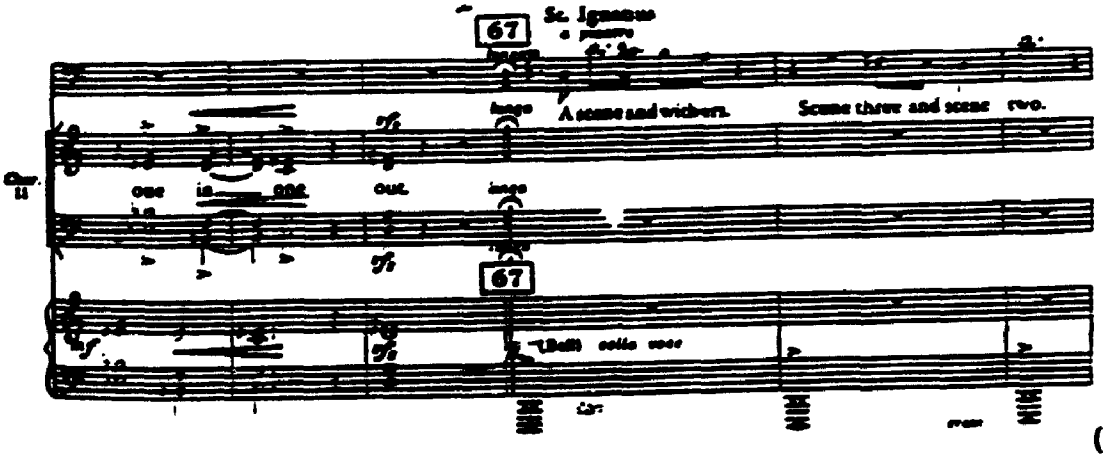
Teresa as a representation is always left, there and not there, and in this state she is framed and constructed but also inevitably fragmented.

Four Saints does not have characters in the conventional sense, that is, as motivators of a narrative line, but it does present figures on stage who carry consistent personas. These personas are more than names: the subtle associations of language and music offer readings of character, rather than delineations of it. Like the portraits in and out of the opera, character is a place of performative and dissociative invocations. Character is an active constellation rather than a fixed subject identity. In one of the more coherent moments of the libretto, Saint Ignatius describes a scene which depicts his character's vision of "place": "When three were together one woman sitting and seeing one man leading and choosing one young man saying and selling", and the chorus responds with the assessment: "This is just as if it was a tribe" (73). As the male character who subtly assumes a cultural authority throughout the opera, Saint Ignatius takes up a limiting position in relation to St. Teresa, whose gender and saint roles are more flexible: "In act 3 St. Ignatius, having failed to bend St. Teresa to his wishes or dominate her mystical visions, has withdrawn from this happily mixed company of queer saints, along with his exclusively male companions, and enforced the tragic divisions of gender separatism" (Blackmer 337). Here St. Ignatius offers his vision of a stable society. The vision

is associated primarily with stability and fixity since it is set in clear sentence structure; that is, it offers a conventional narrative moment which, ironically, disrupts the bewildering free-play of the opera. Further, the stable society, the "tribe," is a clear statement of gender politics, or conventional gender roles: the woman silent and passive, the (older) man as social leader, the younger man speaking and moving the cultural apparatus along. But this statement of stability also carries the material of its own reinterpretation. It is a statement of Saint Ignatius's construction of social (patriarchal) order. That is, throughout *Four Saints*, the saints, though passive (seated), are the locus of creative activity (seeing), and within the context of the opera this passive/ active oscillation is the primary constituent of stage/ saint culture. As well, the chorus's use of the conditional "as if" but lacking the grammatically correct subjunctive, saying instead "it was a tribe", invites a collision of two states of being: the conditional and ephemeral and the empirical and verified. This conflict both reinforces Saint Ignatius's statement of solidity and subverts it. Every self-reflexive or ambiguous, unstructured moment is a contradiction of the notion of cultural stability, and this contradiction here reveals itself to be a contradiction of patriarchal notions of cultural stability. In other words, the project of the opera is disruptive of Saint Ignatius's reasoning. The stable is

associated through Saint Ignatius with the patriarchal, authoritative, monologic voice/ vision.

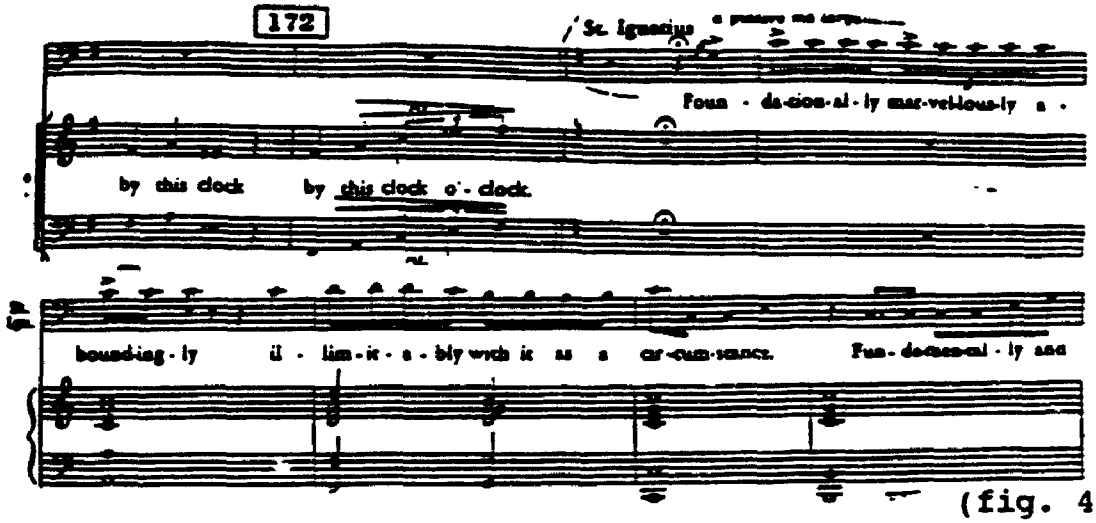
In his contrast in settings of St. Theresa's "arias" (for lack of a better word) and St. Ignatius's, Thomson adds his voice to this alternative dialogue. In the aria "A scene and withers" (53-4, Tableau VI) (figure 4.9), St. Ignatius has a repeated vocal line on a descending D major scale, whose rhythms vary as does the point where the line leaps back up the octave to continue its descent. The orchestral accompaniment is ponderous, sounding an extremely low D at the beginning of each bar accompanied by a bell. The descending line is associated throughout with St. Ignatius while the bell and the held tonic call up associations with traditional liturgical music. These associations have been continually invoked from the beginning of the work. The associations of the music with the stricture of church



(fig. 4.9)

convention and solemnity deploy the associations evoked by words such as "How can a sister see Saint Theresa suitably", and the associations of the words call for a specific interpretation of the music. No meaning is nailed down, not

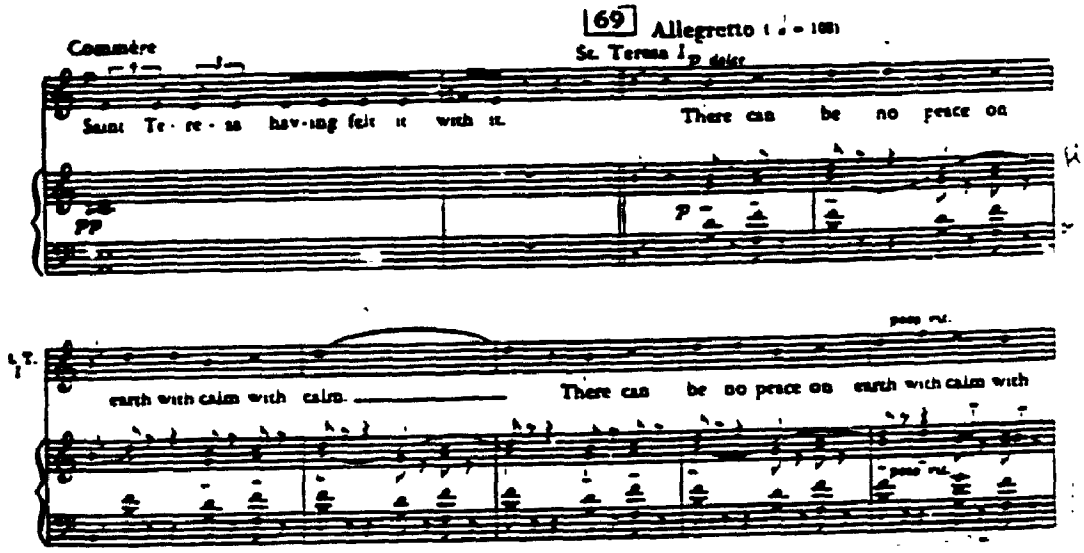
even with the added tableau of St. Theresa in ecstasy. But a dispersed kind of signification is brought into play for music and text simultaneously. This characterization of St. Ignatius is not isolated: in "Vision of the Holy Ghost" (119) (figure 4.10), St. Ignatius's words of patriarchal claims and



(fig. 4.10)

structures, such as "foundationally, aboundingly, illimitably, fundamentally," are accompanied by another variation on the liturgical theme. In contrast, St. Theresa (54-5, Tableau VI) (figure 4.11) has an ascending line of only three notes repeated to a quiet pizzicato accompaniment. This is a variation on St. Ignatius's setting, or his setting is a variation on St. Theresa's, but clearly their respective church motifs are repeated with difference. Her words suggest another side of the liturgy (from "suitably" to "peace"), and the fact that they are all one syllable, not pompous and Latinate, allows their rhythm to be simpler as well.

The division of Theresa has the effect of increasing the dialogic nature of characterization, at least for St. Teresa,



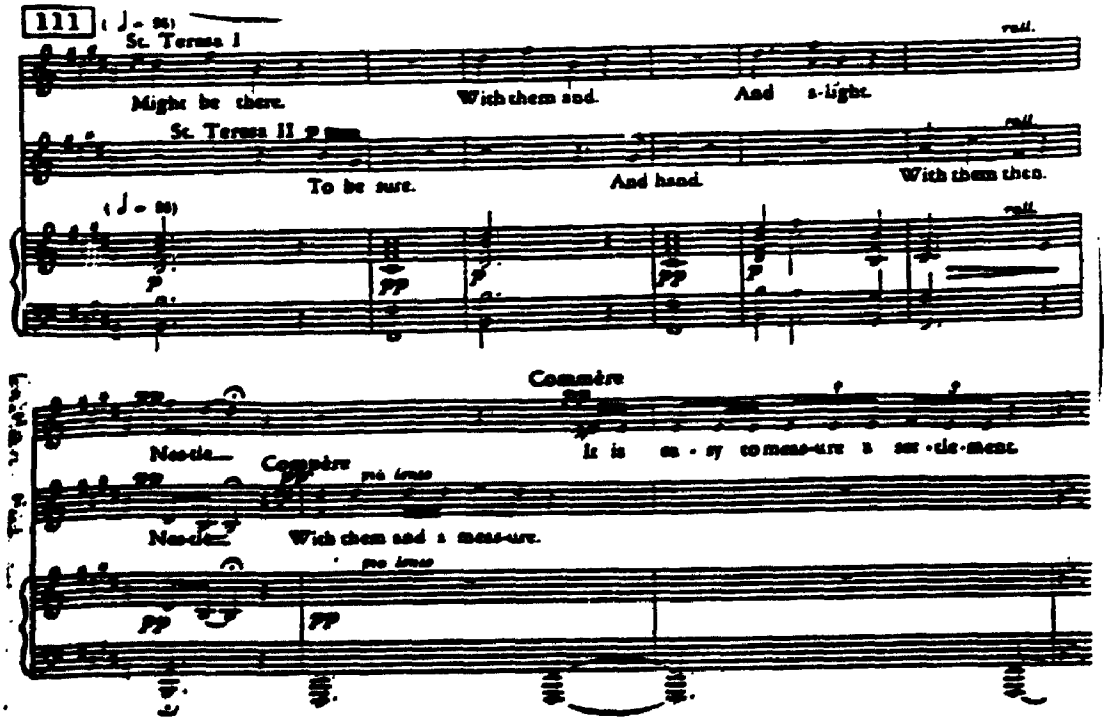
(fig. 4.11)

and adding to the libretto's overall ambiguous representation of subjectivity. With the St. Teresas, subjectivity is divided and multiple, and it is capable of a diversity of positions denied to conventional dramatic characters. In contrast, St. Ignatius's character is unified to the extent that he remains undivided in the setting and that his language and position in relation to St. Teresa are relatively monologic. This difference may have historical roots in the libretto: St. Ignatius is perhaps associated with the stricture of Jesuit culture, while St. Teresa remains a more unpredictable visionary. At any rate, Ignatius is associated in the opera not only with determined expressions of conventional gender relations, as in the above example, but also with pompous Latinate language. While Teresa's language tends to be simple and playful, Ignatius's is polysyllabic and grammatically tortuous. In his representation of a clearly established, traditional masculine or patriarchal persona, Ignatius's musical settings

emphasize and add to the irony of his language. For the most part, the long and complex words of Ignatius's dialogue are set with reductive and repetitive chant rhythms, with little melodic variation, and accompanied by a low register chordal or bell accompaniment. The low register settings emphasize his gender associations while the chants and bells associate Ignatius with restrictive church solemnity. An example of this dialogue between music and text occurs at the end of the "Dance of Angels" in Act Two. Ignatius's dialogue pokes fun at pretentious, over-educated expression: "More needily of which more anon. Of which more which more. A saint to be met by and by by and by continue reading reading read read readily" (*Four Saints* 80). Thomson sets these words to a ponderous descending line in the voice accompanied by a held chord.

In contrast, Thomson provides the two St. Teresas with a much more playful and melodic accompaniment generally. Their language invites a more flexible rhythmic setting than Ignatius's and hence a greater melodic range. As well, Thomson associates the Teresas with a self-reflexive musical motif, the third. Since they sing in duet often, their songs are set a third apart, and Thomson refers to the number play in Stein's dialogue with his musical setting. The libretto's punning on "thirds" is incorporated into the relationship between the Teresas; music becomes part of their overlapping dialogue and subjectivity. Thomson's setting of the two characters' songs emphasizes this very (third) quality of

their dialogue. This reflexive gesture points to character as construct, and, moreover, to the role that musical discourses play in constructing character and gender relations. The duets between the Teresas, in their harmony (set a third apart), suggest a dialogue, but a merging dialogue. This quality of self-conscious slippage between separate-but-not characters takes on erotic overtones between the Teresas that are never suggested in the overt courting of Teresa by Ignatius. In the tableau of the opera that Thomson designated as the "Love Scene" between the *commére* and *compére*, the Teresas follow the male-female couple and pick up on their arpeggiated motif. With the melody and its accompaniment in the upper register, the two women sing in relations of a third ending with the gentle cadence (also on a third, B-D#) on the words "nestle" (figure 4.12). The



(fig. 4.12.)

gentle melodic accompaniment, the upper register setting and the self-reflexive emphasis on the "third" of the two-woman party, all contrast with Ignatius's overdetermined masculinity. While these settings and characters are distinct, they are not reduced in the opera to a binary relation with one another. Instead, the division of the Teresas opens the dialogue to a "third" option, and though Ignatius may not ultimately be able to rise to the occasion, he does participate at least once in a trio with the women. In the end, however, Ignatius "withdrew with withdrew" (*Four Saints* 97).

Butler's analysis of subjectivity and gender also makes room for an analysis of the myth of "race" as it informs identity politics, and in *Four Saints* skin colour becomes an issue in characterization, specifically in the performance of the work. Thomson's casting of the opera opens a multiplicity of divided representational discourses in the opera's performance of identity or character. The extremely conflicted place of the African-American performer in America in the 'thirties leads to a set of contradictory discourses circulating around and through the production. The opera asks, to what degree is difference required for meaning making, for coherence, and to what degree can it disrupt meaning making? Can difference articulate a vision, a scene/ seen? How does repetition highlight the ambiguous nature of difference, insofar as difference is never absolute and repetition is never identical? In gender representation,

differences are maintained only to be questioned through repetition and disruption of representation. On the issue of racial representation, the opera is much more reserved.[5] Only a couple of fragments even mention "race" in references to "negroes". In the opera's only speculation about racial identity, the dialogue questions fixed representation through repetition and difference: "Could a negro be be with a beard to see and to be. Never to have seen a Negro with it there and with it so" (*Four Saints* 40). The repetition of "negro", once with a lower case "n" and once with an upper case "N" (this capitalization occurs in the score version but not in *Last Operas and Plays*), highlights the word as a racial designation. The upper/ lower case difference suggests a difference in operation in the label, and further, highlights the word's function *as* a label -- proper name or description. As well, this little identity question is disrupted by an apparent conflict between seeing and being, carried over into the opera as a whole, in different contexts. A "Negro" may not exist if he is not seen and thus constructed as a visual representation (scene). The unexpected marker of difference, the beard, renders this identity-as-object potentially invisible: difference is both the marker of racial identity and the erasure of that apparently fixed position.

Thomson's choice of cast offers a view of racial politics, the politics of difference, that is paradoxically based on the elision of direct differentiation. At the same time, there operates a discourse of racial anxiety

surrounding the performance -- an impulse to erase, silence, and homogenize the cast of singers. In his choice of an all-black cast, Thomson initiated a convergence between his and Stein's European-American experiments and the artistry of the Harlem Renaissance. This use of African-American performing artists in racially undefined roles was a radical challenge to stereotypes of African-Americans in popular or European art culture. There was little regular work to be had for African-American artists in the theatre of European-Americans in New York in the 1930's, and the work that did exist usually perpetuated the nostalgic stereotypes of black Americans as rural, and homey, with a simple but lively folk tradition. In other words, black actors played "black" characters and had little hope of entering into the European-dominated mainstream, let alone European-American avant-garde experiments. Here lies the particularly revolutionary nature of *Four Saints*: it offered roles in theatre, which avoided representation of so-called "black" America, to African-American actors and singers. In performance, these roles offered the cast members an opportunity to exceed categories of race, as constituted by popular stereotypes, and speak as artists in a relatively "high art" venue.

Once again the collaboration on the production complicates the characterization of the saints: while the set designer, the composer and the program-note writer all attempt to erase colour differences, the choreography draws attention back to cultural practices usually attributed to

racial difference. Philip Ashton choreographed *Four Saints*, and he chose to exploit the cultural heritage of the performers with the introduction of popular dance moves into the opera. In the 'Angel Ballet' many of the steps make "allusion to the Charleston and Snake Hips, if not the Savoy's own Lindy Hop" (Harris 124). These allusions to an African-American dance tradition serve to highlight the issue of race. This collage through collaboration is at odds with other statements about the casting choice in the production. The dance steps, in making reference to popular dance-hall forms of contemporary Harlem, not only bring the production into the present-day of New York in the 'thirties, but also refer to the composition of the cast. This convergence of diverse time references in the visual elements of the opera parallels the juxtaposition of musical and language references between the libretto and the music. This competing circulation of repetition and difference sets in motion a transformative pastiche that questions the terms of its own composition. Cultural categories, discourses of representation, whether visual (colour), musical (gospel), linguistic ("Negro"), or gestural (the Lindy Hop), are set in opposition to other discourses thereby questioning the very constitutive nature of discourse in identity.

At the same time that the production incorporates elements of African-American culture, it also seeks to confine its radical anti-stereotyping within a European historical context. This uncomfortable, because unexplained,

dialectic between denial of racial categories and explicit allusion to them, is underlined by the language of racial anxiety surrounding the event. In a letter to Stein, Thomson says, "My Negro singers, after all, are a purely musical desideratum, because of their rhythm, their style, and especially their diction. Any further use of their racial qualities must be incidental and not of a nature to distract attention from the subject matter. Hence, the idea of painting their faces white" (France 78) -- an idea that was dropped in favour of painting the cast members' faces a uniform shade of brown, to eliminate wide variations in colour. Even while the roles for the cast members are revolutionary in their avoidance of racial stereotypes, the collaborators on the production scramble to limit the implications of this step by homogenizing and silencing the cast. In this letter Thomson suggests the possibility of a divorce between casting and "subject matter" when in fact part of the "subject matter" is this revolutionary use of artists usually neglected by the European establishment. In his program notes to the New York production, Carl Van Vechten says,

> It was genius on Virgil Thomson's part to choose a Negro cast to sing this music and these lovely words. There is a simplicity and distinction about this singing, a clearness in the enunciation, a complete lack of self-consciousness in the involved and intricate action of the piece, which completely justifies his decision in

> this direction. From beginning to end, if one excepts a few intentional lapses on the part of the ballet and one march-chant of the chorus, there is nothing Negro in the gestures or singing speech of this remarkable company. After ten minutes, it is possible to forget altogether (unless you perversely prefer to pleasantly remember) that these are Negro singers (Program Notes to *Four Saints*).

The political implications of the casting are apparently contained by the cast members' ability to seem not-black (though presumably not-white either), and any "lapses" in this performance of not-blackness is to be enjoyed as would a perverse pleasure. Van Vechten perpetuates a common stereotype of his time that African-Americans speak but do not understand Stein's text, that the actors are not intellectually engaged with their material but instead operate at the "unself-conscious" level of nature. The capital-N "Negro" in the program notes is itself a self-conscious assertion of racial otherness -- a category of identity even in Stein's libretto. Van Vechten's and Thomson's representations, or defense, of Thomson's revolutionary casting choice attempt to contain its potential disruption in a discourse of racism taken for granted by many apparently liberal and sympathetic Europeans and European-Americans.

The performance of *Four Saints* both transgresses and reconfirms conservative notions of identity, but the identity

of colour is the more conflicted and contradictory site. The circulation and contradiction of discourses surrounding assumptions of race offer an ambivalent portrait of raced subjectivity, riddled with anxiety and an imposed erotic potential ("perversely prefer to pleasantly remember"). In the extant record of casting decisions, we can see implied in the expression of racial anxiety, an anxiety over representation and fixed categories of identity. In spite of, or perhaps because of, the opera's preoccupation with the nature of representation and identity, the discourses of racism produced by its own collaborators work to reveal the contradictions at the bottom of the very idea of racial identity. That is, binaries of black/ white are questioned even as they are reinforced. Race, like gender or character and scene, is a fluid, shifting and altogether invented category. Any attempt to contain and limit it fails as the project of saintly iconography fails to represent a stable historical identity.

As Thomson sugg.. in his autobiography, the music is all about the static energy of the words, their excess and exuberance. Gertrude Stein's and Virgil Thomson's collaboration on *Four Saints in Three Acts* is a study on the ways in which music and language can inform one another, and it functions as an illustration of a dialogic method between music and libretto. The language exceeds its disciplinary boundaries by invoking and disrupting dramatic and grammatical conventions. The libretto and the music engage

in a play with signification, especially through their extensive and excessive punning. The music also introduces the elements of conventional musical narrative, Western diatonic harmonic structures and quotations of popular musical forms. But like the language, these fragments are juxtaposed with one another. Generic structures are introduced and violated. The music and the text effectively perform one another, referring to the process of signification and participating in the dispersion of reference.

Chapter 5: "Wonderful Words": novelty ends in silence.

> Thats [sic] the trouble with the daughters of generals -- either things are black, or they're white; either theyre [sic] sobs or they're 'shouts--' whereas, I always glide from semi-tone [sic] to semitone; and you never hear the difference between one and another. That's why you don't understand a word I write.
>
> Woolf, letter to Ethel Smyth, 1933.

Compared to *Façade* and *Four Saints in Three Acts*, *Between the Acts* is a conventional work of fiction: it has a clear, chronological narrative, characters, setting -- all the trappings of realist fiction. Further, the novel is strictly confined to its medium, narrative language. It is not set to music, nor is it performed on-stage. How then does this work relate to the preceding examples of collaborative and dialogic music and theatre? Throughout this project I have been suggesting that the collaboration between writers and composers and the dialogue between music and language have served to redefine the discursive properties of both. The experimental modernist writing of Edith Sitwell and Gertrude Stein remakes language by engaging in a dialogue with music. These two writers present language aurally, as a kinetic performance rather than a concrete textual manifestation, and this process of signification allows music to sound as a co-signifier. The relationship between music and language, then, revises disciplinary conceptions of both. Woolf's novel, though it does not engage music as a direct discourse, proposes an exploration of the same possibilities for language that Sitwell and Stein

present in their works. Although her novel is created in narrative language alone, Woolf questions the very power of the word that constitutes her work. Her final novel is, perhaps, her most pessimistic: a gloomy assessment of the limits of the novel form, and the limits of the word as sole signifier. Even while it uses words to represent alternative discourses (nature, performance, music), *Between the Acts* implies that "an act" inevitably exceeds its representational boundaries, and this excess is only expressible ("enacted") through silence.

Though I make no claim for Stein's libretto as an intertext in Woolf's novel, the parallels between *Four Saints* and *Between the Acts* are worth noting. Sitwell's *Façade* may indeed have an intertextual function in the novel, which will be discussed below. The word "act" in the titles clearly has significance for both Stein and Woolf, and that significance concerns the disciplinary nature of the "act" in theatre and its excesses in representation. Both Stein and Woolf suggest that the theatrical act operates as an artificial and limiting containment of the dispersed significance of representational activity. In *Four Saints*, the act as a container is disrupted by its merging, or confusion, with the saints. The act as it characterizes conventional theatre is disrupted and rendered static, as the saints impede linear narrative. The saints cross the disciplinary boundaries of character and act division, effectively acting in between. In *Between the Acts*, the intervals between acts function also

as a place of subjective slippage. Exchanges or silences between characters are imitated in the narrative structure of the novel which introduces slippages between the discrete disciplinary boundaries, not only of acts, but also of narrative voice and dialogue. These gaps and exchanges serve to disrupt the conventional narrative functioning of the novel. While in *Four Saints*, the final act is, as it ends, the opera's only "fact", in the novel, the first act only begins as silence descends. That is, the novel ends with the rising of the curtain. In both works, language cannot have a strictly representational function. In fact, language exceeds or avoids representation in *Four Saints* while it is sadly inadequate to the task in *Between the Acts*. The act, as a signifier, has permeable boundaries, and no signified to tie itself to. The act, the word, is in a kind of paradoxical circulation, disrupting and silencing.

Between the Acts addresses other issues of language, narrative and representation also taken up by Stein and Sitwell: specifically, gender, race and imperialism. Like Sitwell, Woolf uses the figures of imperialism and conventional gender definition, or dominative ideology in general, to address the ideological limits or confinements of language. The discourses that represent imperialism and by which conventional gender roles are circulated, reveal, in Sitwell, Stein (though she focuses more on gender than anything) and Woolf, their limits of containment. The works by these writers shatter the disc.plinary boundaries of

conventional language by fragmenting and repeating them and this process, allowing for a mutual signification of music and language, also engages in a critique of dominant ideologies. The disciplinary boundaries that keep music and language separate are similar, in operation though certainly not in effect, to those that define restrictive conventional gender roles and those that keep the dominative politics of class and colonialism in operation. By disrupting the rigid definitions and practices of these ideologies, Sitwell, Stein and Woolf also effect a flexible model of signification. In this chapter, I will discuss *Between the Acts*' performance intertexts and its concern with music, but I will also focus on the representation of class and imperialism in the novel, and finally the narrative's pessimistic ruminations on the limits of language.

Woolf and Smyth

Virginia Woolf, like the other writers in this study, maintained a long-term friendship with a composer. Though Ethel Smyth never set any of Woolf's prose to music, the influence of their friendship can be traced through ten or so years of Woolf's work. Friends from about 1930 to 1941, Woolf and Smyth shared a complex, at times passionate (for Smyth rather more than for Woolf), and often antagonistic relationship. Smyth, born in 1858 as the daughter of a military man, studied music in Leipzig and traveled around Europe trying to etch out a place for herself in the male-

dominated world of European music. She composed mainly operas and had a great deal of difficulty getting her work performed: she complained, "[a]t every attempt to get my head above water it was firmly pressed under again, the two fatal words [woman composer] relegating me to the ranks of the negligible" (Smyth 24). A lesbian, a suffragist, and a prolific writer, Smyth managed to make herself heard in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century musical culture, but her music, to this day, remains relatively obscure. She composed many operas, the best known of which is *The Wreckers*. She formed an attachment to Virginia Woolf, who found Smyth interesting but often overwhelming and difficult. Smyth, for her part, was irritated by Woolf's mental illness and what she perceived to be an emotional detachment. In her account of their friendship, Suzanne Raitt claims that Woolf was fascinated by Smyth, whom she "regarded as an endless story" (Raitt 6). Raitt suggests that the interchange between Smyth and Woolf was born of a mutual need for female love and companionship, that both felt the desire for a womanly friend/ lover and an absent mother. The relationship, then, helped both women to read the "story" of their own gender identification: "[the] maternal metaphor is crucial to the kinds of narrative identifications that women develop, and the ways in which they use those identifications to challenge and confirm each other's femininity. The implication of this essay ["'The tide of Ethel'"] is that women achieve, or struggle with, gender identity as much in

consonance with other women as in the more formal structures of heterosexuality, and furthermore, that the model for these interactions is often the relation between mother and daughter" (8). The emphasis on unstable gender identity, and the combination of an erotic and maternal need in Smyth's and Woolf's relationship find their way into Woolf's work. Loosely connected with this shifting discourse of gender is a fascination with the shifting discourses of performance and music.

Woolf and Smyth may have discussed in some detail music as a discourse. Certainly, Woolf wrote to Smyth in 1940 asking her to "[w]rite your loves and hates for Bach Wagner etc out in plain English. I have an ulterior motive. I want to investigate the influence of music on literature" (*Letters* IV 450). However, there is little extant evidence of a direct influence of Smyth, as a composer, on Woolf's work. Instead, we see a mixed portrait of Smyth as a personality, and of this portrait, the representation of music is an element. In the headnote to this chapter, Woolf reveals her own ambivalence not only about Smyth as a person but also about her musicality. The quotation is from a letter addressing the aftermath of one of the women's many quarrels, in which Woolf reprimands Smyth for complaints of Woolf's neglect of her. Woolf creates, in this letter, a rather larger rift between herself and Smyth in accusing a composer of insensitivity to music and language simultaneously. This accusation constitutes a damning assessment of Smyth's

ability. Beyond Woolf's angry retort to her friend's own accusations of heartlessness (a constant theme in Smyth's correspondence to Woolf) lurks an interesting slippage between music and language. In this passage, Woolf elides the difference between the discourse of music and language, and implicitly claims her own mastery over both. Music is, by Woolf's definition, subtle and incremental, signifying by degrees and by relation. Language is apparently capable of similar movements to those themselves subtle enough to hear it. Woolf's difficult relationship with Smyth seems to have been productive of more than a critique of Smyth's insensitivity. The interchange that took place over the years between the composer and the writer resulted ultimately in the portrait (caricature?) of the artist Miss La Trobe in *Between the Acts*, and perhaps, in the musical conception of language and narrative that characterizes the novel.

In her analysis of the relationship between Dame Ethel and Virginia, Suzanne Raitt suggests that they engaged in a greater personal exchange than Woolf would lead her readers to believe. Raitt suggests that Smyth offered Woolf a conception of character, and art, that was rooted in biography ("facts") but always undergoing evolution. In a letter to Smyth, Woolf describes Ethel as "not a finished precious vase, but a porous receptacle" (*Letters* VI 406) and tells her that she values this aspect of her personality: "The point of being Ethel Smyth is that the story seems never to end, and the book that will give the final clue can by

definition never be written. 'I believe every book is only a fragment; and one may be a brighter or a bigger fragment; but to complete the whole, one must read them all'" (Raitt 7 quoting *Letters* VI 406). Thus the incorporation of Smyth's character into the novel renders the notion of authorial subjectivity plural, and it invites an explicit comparison between the materials of music and language. Even further, this composite character implies an awareness of art and the artist as inherently transforming, mutli-vocal, multi-generic and fragmented.

Between the Acts may be Woolf's most radically experimental novel. It offers a rereading of modernity which questions notions of unified narrative and subjectivity -- particularly the writing/ creating subject. While in *Four Saints in Three Acts* and *Façade* we have seen examples of literal collaboration between writers and composers and interchange between discourses of music and language, in *Between the Acts* the writer and composer are melded into one figure, and language refers to its own musical properties. The central preoccupation of the novel is language, especially dialogue -- language as communication. As well, the flexibility of language is revealed in the novel through a dialogic (in the Bakhtinian sense) method exemplified by intertextuality, multigeneric references, and a disruption of conventional structures of authority, including that of the narrator/ narrative. Language and narrative are associational rather than linear, and no utterance completely

escapes the touch of history, though none is ever completely defined by it either.

Woolf described her novel in her diary as "'I' rejected: 'We' substituted" (*Diary* IV 135), and as "an interesting attempt at a new method" (*D* IV 340). She herself considered *Between the Acts* to be her most experimental novel, and this experiment is in part characterized by the notion of collaboration which underlies the narrative. Though the novel is not literally a collaborative venture in the way that *Four Saints* and *Façade* are, it incorporates the notion of shared creative authority by establishing a composite character in the role of the creative artist. Miss La Trobe functions in the novel as the creative voice, but her character seems to combine the subtlety of the writer (Woolf) with the belligerence and disruption of the composer (Smyth). Though cowed by Dame Ethel's lack of subtlety, Woolf was forced to admire, as Elizabeth Wood points out, the strength with which she blustered her way into a male dominated profession, thrusting aside seemingly immovable tradition: "The fictional Ethel Smyth is Woolf's Miss La Trobe of *Between the Acts*. . . . The typescripts add to the character who finally appears in *Between the Acts* as the lesbian outcast and passionate artist who has the power and the desire to 'stir in her listeners and players their unacted part.' . . . Miss La Trobe is Woolf's tribute to Smyth as *Orlando* is to Vita Sackville-West" (Wood 137-38). The evidence for Miss La Trobe as a fictional version of Ethel

Smyth lies mostly in similarities between Woolf's descriptions of the two characters in her *Diary* and in the novel. Aside from the biographical similarities (both are lesbian, for example) and the personality similarities (Woolf describes both as aggressive, demanding, intractable, and despairing), there exist similarities in physical description: for example, Woolf describes Smyth conducting "in her battered felt, in her jersey and short skirt" (*D* IV 9). In *Between the Acts* Miss La Trobe is described as having an "abrupt manner and stocky figure; her thick ankles and sturdy shoes; her rapid decisions barked out in guttural accent" (*BA* 50).

However, Miss La Trobe is not only in charge of the gramophone which provides such tenuous links between the audience and the performance, she is also responsible for the text of the drama. Her passion for "getting things up" crosses boundaries from music to text to performance, just as her character seems to cross the boundary from Smyth to Woolf. Many critics have argued that Miss La Trobe is a *self*-portrait:

> Miss La Trobe, the dramatist, curses the tyranny of the audience and its demand for tea just as Virginia Woolf, the novelist, often cursed the reader and his [sic] demand for 'fact'. Of the many self portraits executed by Virginia Woolf, Miss La Trobe is her most satiric. Here is a Portrait of the Artist as old Bossy . . . . Woolf's caricature of the artist dominates a work that

> caricatures Woolf's own kind of art, for *Between the Acts* is a novel that burlesques a play that burlesques a poem that burlesques a novel. In this circular generic mix Woolf achieves the apotheosis of what she calls the 'play-poem idea' at the same time as she demolishes it (Fussell 263).

While Miss La Trobe's characteristics clearly resemble the Ethel Smyth who crops up in Woolf's letters and diaries, the fact that she is one of the figures of a writer in *Between the Acts* provides a parallel between her experiments *in* the novel and Woolf's experiments *with* the novel. The blending of two such distinct, even opposed (as Woolf would have it), voices in one character suggests an expansion of notions of authority. The multiple character leads to the multi-voiced or generic text and offers a model for the interchange between music, performance and text. The novel like the artist is a productive site of slippage between discourses.

Many critics, and Woolf herself, have pointed to various interdisciplinary interpretive possibilities offered by the novel. In his interpretation of the "interval" of the novel's title, B.H. Fussell notes that it overlaps the disparate genres at work in the novel: "the Interval equates dramatic and narrative modes so that by framing a play within a novel, Woolf makes each mode of action an 'interval' of the other. . . . Finally, the interval in its musical sense equates melody, or a distance in pitch between notes sounded successively, with harmony, where notes are sounded

simultaneously" (267-68). Woolf points in her *Diary* to the various experiments with genre introduced in the novel: a play (*D* IV 139), poetry (*D* IV 180), "a medley" (*D* IV 193), "rhythm" (*D* IV 339), and "a small canvas" (*D* IV 336). The novel's forays in and out of various genres, and its allusions to other art forms, constitute a collaborative emphasis on dialogue. That is, the novel is a forum for the collaboration between discourses and that dialogism undercuts, again, any notion of the unified work of art, character or language:

> Thus while Woolf values classical comedy's detachment, she also shares Bakhtin's suspicion of its monological 'completedness,' its vision of reality as an ahistorical, 'absolute distanced image, beyond the sphere of possible contact with the developing, incomplete, and therefore rethinking and re-evaluating present'. . . . Woolf distrusts the conventions not only of comedy, but of all established genres, for she recognized that literary conventions are inextricably tied to social conventions of which 'men are the arbiters' (McWhirter 789).

McWhirter argues that *Between the Acts* is an example of a dialogic novel as Bakhtin saw it, and that Woolf borrowed from the Elizabethan tragicomedy those qualities of dialogism for her novel: "its mixed form, perspectival inclusiveness, and refusal to privilege any one voice or viewpoint" (791). In fact, this inclusive "heteroglossia" exceeds the

perameters of the play in the novel to include the sounds of airplanes flying overhead and cows lowing in the field in the aural fabric of the play. No one voice or form in this polysemous book takes precedence over any other, and, McWhirter's analysis would suggest, the representation of discourses which can take part in the "dialogue" is expanded to include not only the generic structures and the language of direct communication, but also such indirect communications as music and even animal noises. Thus the generic free play allows for a loose conception of language and meaning, and this incomplete quality has specifically political implications: "her uncertainty, which moves beyond Dostoevsky's 'hopeless interrogation' toward a more productive openness in which we are 'left asking questions,' may be our best alternative to the lure of fascism, that most certain and centered of modernist ideologies" (McWhirter 808).

Many critics have noted the apparently democratic thematic function that music carries in the novel. The moment of epiphany, the apotheosis for art that Woolf proposes in *Between the Acts* (as it appears to some critics anyway), comes with the music on the gramophone, on the verge of an interval in the pageant. The music that unites the audience at this moment is the "traditional tune" associated with European high culture (Bach, Beethoven, Handel, Mozart), and it has, given the generic preoccupations established by McWhirter, an ambiguous status. Traditional art forms have

been represented throughout the novel as monologic and in need of re-representation. The discourses of Renaissance tragicomedy, the eighteenth century farce, the Victorian melodrama (operetta?) are reworked, fragmented, and parodied. This approach to the traditional forms of dramatic art would suggest that traditional musical structures are no less open to critique. The relatively monologic agenda of functional harmony (think again of Edward Said) is raised implicitly in its capacity to unite the dissipating audience. The music's ambivalence is again reflected in a stylistic ambivalence in the narrative, since though it is without the dramatic stylization of the "jazz" sequence discussed by Jack Stewart (in chapter 2), this passage contains its own hesitations and disjunctions:

> Like quicksilver sliding, filings magnetized, the distracted united. The tune began; the first note meant a second; the second a third. Then down beneath a force was born in opposition; then another. On different levels ourselves went forward; flower gathering some on the surface; others descending to wrestle with the meaning; but all comprehending; all enlisted (*BA* 137).

In the first sentence, the assonances and rhymes do not seem to have an alienating effect. Unlike the jazz sequence, they do not draw attention to themselves. As the passage progresses, the same punctuation (semi-colon) is used to separate each utterance, though each is a continuation of the one before. The text would appear to describe a fugue or at

any rate a contrapuntal piece, and this again suggests a simultaneous separation (each line standing independently) and unification. The audience members attach themselves to different lines or functions in the music, while maintaining a general understanding. Though critics privilege this moment of unification as the epiphany of the novel and its statement about the social function of art, I am not sure that this characterization is born out by a general interpretation of the novel's attitude towards art, genre and tradition.

As Jack Stewart has proposed, Woolf was influenced by the cubist painters (as Stein was though perhaps to a greater degree), and this interpretation of interdisciplinary intertextuality, or dialogism, extends in Stewart's analysis to music. The jazz sequence is a specific example, for Stewart, of Woolf's cubist method. That is, it constitutes both a representation and a formal presentation of disjunction. Moreover, this transition from nursery-rhyme to jazz-inflected popular dance music highlights the novel's appropriation and recombination of popular and traditional discourses. Coupled as it is with the "anonymous bray of the infernal megaphone" (*BA* 137), this musical pastiche or collage offers a representation of the materials of culture. These materials are denaturalized, revealed as artificial and not inherently unified or unifying. This scene in *Between the Acts* is, in other words, very similar to Edith Sitwell's and William Walton's project in *Façade*, a work which predates

the novel by nearly twenty years. Woolf describes her experience of the 1923 performance of *Façade* in much the same terms as her audience's experience of the last part of the pageant in *Between the Acts*:

> . . . yesterday in the Aeolian Hall, listening, in a dazed way, to Edith Sitwell vociferating through the megaphone. There was Lady Colfax in her hat with the green ribbons. . . . I should be describing Edith Sitwell's poems [*Façade*], but I kept saying to myself 'I don't really understand . . . I don't really admire.' The only view, presentable view that I framed, was to the effect that she was monotonous. She has only one tune on her merry go round. And she makes her verse step accurately to the hornpipe. This seems to be wrong (*A Moment's Liberty* 163-4).

There is no specific indication in Woolf's diaries or letters from the time period of *Between the Acts* to suggest that she consciously used *Façade* as an intertext in that novel. However, her description of the contemporary segment of the pageant bears a number of striking resemblances to Sitwell's work, not the least of which is the megaphone sounding from the bushes. The voice is masked, as in *Façade*, a "megaphonic, anonymous, loudspeaking affirmation" (135). The voice diverges from Sitwell's text in a sense since it claims to speak "in words of one syllable, without larding, or stuffing or cant" (135), whereas Sitwell's poems employed almost incomprehensibly long words, with rhythm and

rhyme. The voice also assumes, however, "a colloquial, conversational tone" (136) in its attempt at deconstructing familiar self-representations associated with traditional art forms. The voice asks the audience to look at themselves and at their conventional modes of representation. It offers an explanation of the bits of broken mirrors, and the fragments of popular music.

This project would appear to engage in a critique of monologic modes of discourse similar to Sitwell and Walton's critique in *Façade*. The references to music seem to support this reading:

> The tune hummed: *The King is in his counting house,/ Counting out his money,/ The Queen is in her parlour/ Eating* . . . Suddenly the tune stopped. The tune changed. A waltz was it? . . . The tune changed; snapped; broke; jagged. Fox-trot was it? Jazz? Anyhow the rhythm kicked, reared, snapped short. What a jangle and a jingle! Well, with the means at her disposal, you can't ask too much. What a cackle, a cacophony! Nothing ended. So abrupt. And corrupt. Such an outrage; such an insult; And not plain. Very up to date, all the same. What is her game? To disrupt? (133)

The waltz tune in the novel is associated with the ideal of modern existence: "Each flat with its refrigerator" (132-3). The waltz, at least by the beginning of the twentieth-century, is evocative of a historical sense of order and

propriety, and of class consciousness. Its disruption in *Between the Acts*, as well as in *Façade*, constitutes a critique not only of that historical ideal, the ascendancy of middle-class sensibilities, but also of the subtle discursive codes which reinforce it or are associated with it. The waltz and the fox-trot are, in the novel as in *Façade*, disrupted by competing rhythms, jazz rhythms, and by fragmentation, disjunction. The language, as well, seems to imitate Sitwell's style: the rhymes (abrupt, corrupt, disrupt) and rhythms. The sequence, "Nothing ended. So abrupt. And corrupt. Such an outrage", appears to introduce a syllabic repetition that imitates a waltz pattern which is itself interrupted by four-syllable structures (rather like a three- and four-beat rhythmic opposition in music). In *Façade* we saw the repetition of nursery rhymes, popular dances forms, waltz, fox-trot, hornpipe, and the reflexivity of that repetition. The use and variation of popular forms, coupled with the highly stylized and reflexive discourses of the poems, transformed the conventional (taken as natural) into a historically inflected and conflicted series of discourses. The attention to the conventional materials of representation and their re-representation, their flattening, cutting up and juxtaposition, revealed these materials to be constructed themselves. Distinctions between disciplines in *Façade* are broken down by cross-reference and cultural critique. Woolf's novel employs a strikingly similar method

similar end. While the novel form itself is comprised of a single mode of expression, language, the possibilities for language are multiplied through representation.

If *Façade* is indeed an intertext, acknowledged or not, in the novel, the notion of collaborative authorship is extended beyond the implicit combination of personas, writer (Woolf) and composer (Smyth), to include another explicit collaboration (Sitwell and Walton). This multi-voiced model is complicated by Woolf's characterization of both Smyth and Sitwell as somewhat laughable artistic failures, attempting to capture a modern aesthetic but succeeding only in being didactic or monotonous. Thus, the "now time" section of the pageant may constitute both an implicit critique of the "up to date" notion of art and a revision of Woolf's own historical discourses -- from boredom to mixed admiration. Certainly, this section of the novel draws attention to the importance of performance. Not only does this pageant raise the issue of collaborative authorship but it also suggests that apparently opposed discourses can slide into one another, just as semitone slides into semitone. Disciplinary oppositions are not as fixed as they appear to be. In Woolf's novel this transformation of discourses is achieved only through performance and is experienced through the listening/ watching function of the audience. The process of transformation is constituted in the simultaneous performance and experience of multiple conflicting discourses.

The narrative structures the play, but its representation is not distinct. Instead, the performance of the play, its unconfinable and evasive nature, is constructed within the narrative, itself indeterminate. The beginning and ending of the play are ambiguous: "So it was the play then. Or the prologue?" (59). And throughout, the narrative is engaged in a fluid exchange with the representation of the play, just as the play is represented as interspersed with the "performances" of its setting (audience, airplanes, cows). Quite literally the machinery of representation keeps the audience in its role, even as it disrupts, since it is the machinery and not the representation that is foremost in the audience's/ reader's mind: "for the play was going on. Yet the stage was empty; only the cows moved in the meadows; only the tick of the gramophone needle was heard. The tick, tick, tick seemed to hold them together, tranced. Nothing whatsoever appeared on the stage" (63). Just as the machinery, the tick of the gramophone needle (though not the music) keeps the audience tenuously together (though distracted), so does the narrative attempt and disrupt its own generic unifying representative function. By interrupting not only the dialogue of the characters in the play and the dialogue of the characters in the narrative (the audience), but also itself with parenthetical remarks, the narrative enacts the dispersion of representation that it presents in the play in a telescoping reflexivity: "He said (without words) 'I'm damnably unhappy'" (128). Art,

representation, is its own disruption, not only in the play but also in the narrative of the play. Ironically, the continuing of the emotion, the filling in of the gaps actually serves to highlight those absences.

Those voices that interrupt the performance and the narrative also serve to carry its tenuous emotion. As the primary representatives of this function, music exists both as a historically informed discourse and as an unspeakable and ephemeral presence in narrative. Music is a sliding scale of signification: "From the garden -- the window was open -- came the sound of someone practising scales. A.B.C. A.B.C. A.B.C. Then the separate letters formed one word 'Dog'. Then a phrase. It was a simple tune, another voice speaking" (87). The impossibility of this transference from musical language to scripted language emphasizes the apparent contradiction at the root of musical signification. Music unites the fractured audience, not as dialogue or narrative, because it is outside the discipline of the word, and yet once recognized it is as bound by the forces of convention as language: "Then the tune, with its feet always on the same spot, became sugared, insipid; bored a hole with its perpetual invocation to perpetual adoration. Had it -- he was ignorant of musical terms -- gone into the minor key?" (88). The gaps and absences in the narrative, of the novel and of the play, the unspoken dialogues between characters, the continued emotion, are all potentially linked by music or by its means of representation. However, music itself, once

representable, once recognizable becomes almost as fixed as the word. As a discourse, it bores the same holes that language discourses bore in their attempt at repetition and representation, yet music has the most potential for crossing disciplinary borders in performance. It is the model of performance, perhaps never achieved in the play or the novel: it shifts positions continuously, never remaining rooted.

Imperialism

The dialogic character of the "author" as represented in *Between the Acts* has, as a few critics have noticed, direct political implications. Set as it is on the eve of World War II, the novel deals obliquely with the connection between art and authorship and notions of political authority, not just fascist but imperialist as well. As in *Façade*, *Between the Acts* suggests an intimate relationship between discursive limitations and accepted notions of authority, particularly of colonial authority. Woolf's questioning of British imperialist structure, or any imperialist structures, parallels her preoccupation with conventional limitations of language and authority. The languages of authority or domination are similar to the notion of the single creative artist, the original author. Just as the author-function is disrupted in *Between the Acts* through suggestion of collaboration and intertextuality, so are dominant political structures, or more specifically discourses, disrupted through multiple and contradictory representation. The

monologic status of imperial and class systems of authoritarian oppression are revealed to be rooted in language issues, or in the politics of representation, and in the repetition and disruption of their discourses, the systems themselves are brought into question.

The opening of the novel immediately introduces imperialism as a geographic narrative. That is, space is defined and therefore politicized through narratives of conquest and domination:

> The old man in the arm-chair -- Mr. Oliver, of the Indian Civil Service, retired -- said that the site they had chosen for the cesspool was, if he had heard aright, on the Roman road. From an aeroplane, he said, you could still see, plainly marked, the scars made by the Britons; by the Romans; by the Elizabethan manor house; and by the plough, when they ploughed the hill to grow wheat in the Napoleonic wars (7).

The old colonizer, Mr. Oliver, offers a definition of the landscape, ironically associated with the cesspool, which maps a physical history of successive domination onto the land. The invasive or militaristic flavour of these defining narratives of place is emphasized by the vantage point for the recognition of this definition: the airplane. The motif of the airplane is later established in the novel (as in Woolf's diaries) as a figure for military domination; the droning of the planes overhead signifies the threat of destruction or invasion by air. Thus, the histories of

British domination, both at home and abroad are implicitly linked with the fearful spread of fascism. As well, the threat of colonization by others (Napoleon and the Romans) is linked with Britain's own impulse to colonize, and with the inner colonization of class structures (the Elizabethan manor house) preserved in the contemporary time of the novel in the space of Pointz Hall. Above all, however, is the suggestion that space is defined and confined by narrative, by the language of history. What seems inevitable and natural (national boundaries, class hierarchies) is revealed to be a function, in part anyway, of language. The man who controls the language (Oliver) controls the space.

Judith Johnston has pointed cut the importance of one of Woolf's intertextual allusions for the critique of imperialism in *Between the Acts*: "Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, like Woolf's novel, reflects Marlow's opening strategy in his narrative, drawing the audience back to an England that seemed uncivilized to a Roman commander" (273). In Conrad's novella, imperialism is represented through successive narrative structures, in fact *as* narrative. However, Conrad proposes a notion of historical regression which is analogous to spatial and narrative movement away from the civilized world. Even as his narrative reveals the suspect economic motives and cruelties of colonialism, Marlow describes himself traveling farther away from the center of European civilization, and that geographical narrative is merged with a cultural de-evolution, moving away from civilization and

back to some more primitive time. Woolf makes it clear, however, that the savage spaces of *Between the Acts* are either entirely "here and now" or unrepresentable. The heart of darkness in Woolf's novel is the entirely contemporary cesspool in the backyard. History appears to be not a progressive narrative but a diverse collection of stories. As Johnston points out, Woolf saw history as "a cycle of domination and victimization rather than a progress of civilization progressing from Greece to Rome to Norman England to the British Empire" (254). Woolf's recognition of the possibility for multiple historical and geographic narratives is echoed in her revision of narrative method "which embodies a polyvocal alternative to the single authoritarian voice" (Johnston 255). In fact the multi-genetic and dialogic character of the narrative in the novel is a specifically political choice: "In the composite form of *Between the Acts*, mixing authorial narration, characters' thoughts, dramatic verse parodies, and dialogue, she creates alternatives to one tyrannical authorial voice" (Johnston 256). The figure of the author in the novel, Miss La Trobe, is obviously conflicted. On the one hand she is described as a petty dictator, the megaphone acting as a parody of "the intrusive authorial voice" (Johnston 266) and fascist propaganda, and on the other hand she manages to suppress her impulse to make the audience bow to her language in the last section of the pageant (ten minutes of present time). The model for the last section of the pageant, in fact, escapes

language almost completely. Instead, the "author" is multiplied: the audience reflected in mirrors, the sounds of the cows, airplanes overhead, all become authors in this experimental performance art. Unlike fascist-influenced modernists who also favoured an effaced author (Ezra Pound, for example), Miss La Trobe's art, at this final moment, bypasses the tyranny not only of the author but of the word as well.

Woolf's interest in British imperialism extends beyond *Between the Acts* to many of her other novels, including *The Waves*, and further to her relationship with Leonard Woolf and their work at Hogarth Press (Kathy Phillips viii, xxxiii). Woolf's attention to issues of political authority seems to be linked to her experiments with cubist ideas of form. Kathy Phillips suggests that Woolf employs something of a "montage" method which parallels Brecht's models for theatre: "The most important technique shared by Woolf and Brecht is juxtaposition, designed to shock the audience. Thus Brecht sets up disorienting overlaps in a 'cubistic' project of revealing a 'multifaceted and contradictory outer reality . . . .' Woolf, too, wants to jar, not soothe, the reader" (xvii). Especially in the pageant, Woolf draws attention to the discourses of imperialism as they are embedded in artistic or authorial convention: "English exploitation of colonial subjects forms a major topic of La Trobe's skits relating to the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, conveying a pervasive guilt about past

colonialism" (Phillips 202). As Phillips points out, "Where There's a Will There's a Way" parodies the tradition established by Sheridan in *A School for Scandal*, Richard Cumberland in *The West Indian*, and Fanny Burney in *A Busy Day*, "in which plots turn on colonial inheritance" (Phillips 207). However, in the eighteenth-century examples, the source of the fortune, colonialism and slavery, goes unmentioned, while in Miss La Trobe's play these issues are explicit. Budge the policeman's speech also serves to parody a self-serving Victorian conception of imperialism as the "white man's burden" and the skit "The Picnic Party" suggests a complicated relationship between Victorian family dynamics, religious fervour/ hypocrisy and colonial politics.

As in Sitwell's *Façade*, imperialist discourses, or representations of imperialism, are fragmented, and those fragments juxtaposed with one another or with alternative discourses. The narrative disrupts the colonization of language by imperialist ideology by taking the representative discourses and rendering them absurd. Instead of having a limiting, referential, and controlling function, language or discourses appear to be multiplied. This multiplication, as in *Façade*, renders discourse self-reflexive, and once recognized as a floating element of the collage, a discourse disrupts others, making signification multiple and dispersed. The novel's play with the associative power of words and their place in various discourses of domination is established not only in the parody of popular art forms that

constitute the skits in the pageant. The words of imperialism leak out of the confines of the staged piece into its narrative frame thereby disrupting the narrative distance from its object of discussion. The irruption of these discourses into the narrative is an alienating, self-reflexive moment that stresses a lack of authority and transparency in the narrative itself. The interval in which Miss La Trobe prepares the company for "The Victorian Age", the segment of the performance containing the fullest treatment of imperialism, draws attention to the reflexivity of the narrative. This self-reflexivity sets up a crossover of racist discourse and ideas that serves to undermine the authoritative position of the narrative as well as anticipating a critical view of the racism underlying imperialist self-justification. With the disruption of conventional narrative, and of authoritative discourse, comes a loss of referential certainty in language. Suddenly, language fills with a complex potential.

The narrative undermines its own authority by calling attention to itself as a construct and by violating its conventional third-person omniscience. The narrative explicitly draws attention to its own production by moving from third person narration to first and back to third again, creating a moment of disorientation: "yet somehow they felt -- how could one put it -- a little not quite here or there. As if the play had jerked a ball out of the cup; as if what I call myself was still floating unattached, and didn't settle.

Not quite themselves they felt" (*BA* 110). "They" feel not quite here or there as they are constituted by the narrative and the narrative is floating, not quite here or there. They are the ball out of the cup of the third person narrative: if "they" become "I" in the middle of the narrative passage, the place assigned to self-representation of the characters ("I" in quotation marks) is disrupted and the characters are displaced, not feeling "quite themselves". In fact, the conventional narrative is displaced or disrupted by the same means it uses to express the disruption or displacement of the characters. By crossing the boundary between narrative voice and character voice, the narrative reveals both to be only separable by convention. Divisions between disciplinary boundaries are erected and maintained only through convention. This notion is reinforced a few lines later as a character echoes in dialogue a phrase just expressed in the narrative: "The weather looked a little unsettled. Folly was for a moment ashen white. The sun struck the gilt vane of Bolney Minster. 'Looks a little unsettled,' someone said" (110). This permeability of discursive and disciplinary boundaries sets the stage for a subtle critique of imperialist language: "Down among the bushes [Miss La Trobe] worked like a nigger" (110). Racist discourse is interjected into the authoritative narrative, disrupting the narrative and highlighting the discourse as a construction, as artificial.

It is of course possible that this use of racist language is simply an expression of a failure of understanding typical of Woolf's contemporaries and colleagues. Certainly she did not entirely manage to avoid racist stereotyping or use of offensive language (Phillips xxxiv). However, it seems more likely that it contains an implicit critique: "We are warned before this sketch [Victorian] itself of trouble to come, for -- in the novel around the pageant -- a brutal phrase disturbs the dignity of Woolf's usual diction. . . . Sure enough, the sketch mocks high minded imperialism" (Watkins 366). The phrase is "brutal" in its introduction of a baldly racist and domineering word into an apparently innocuous setting. Though Woolf's associations with it were undoubtedly different than ours, the word "nigger" does an actual violence to the fabric of the narrative similar to that done by the invasion of dialogue into narrative (or vice versa?). Not only is the narrative brutally disrupted for a moment, which once again undermines its authority, the "brutal" word anticipates the subtler discourses of brutality introduced by Budge's speech and by the picnic sketch. Language, in this analysis, carries ideological power which can be defamiliarized through dislocation. The monologic status of an imperialist language is powerful in isolation, but when the conventional boundaries of discipline or definition are exceeded, the language is revealed to be constructed at the exclusion of other voices -- in violence to other voices.

Racist or imperialist discourses in *Between the Acts* draw attention to the function of language in the reproduction of ideology, and as such, in the representation of the "real world". Colonialism is, in part, focused on the control of language and representation, and once the signifier is shaken from its certain relationship with a signified, control becomes much more difficult. As Gertrude Stein's text plays with the discourses of identity, so does Woolf's novel with the discourses of power, both creating a mobile cubist-like collage which demands a flexibility of representation hitherto denied language.

Languages of class

Class-based ideologies function in much the same ways as imperialist discourses, or gendered discourses. They reduce the apparent range and multiplicity of language positions and associations. Woolf's novel draws attention to the issue of class specifically through language, but her implicit critique of British class structures seems to hold little hope for any potential transformation of or translation between the distinct groups. Many critics have argued that the nameless bunch of villagers who roam the pageant in Virginia Woolf's *Between the Acts* function as a chorus while the actors who play main roles are only slightly more differentiated. In the common critical reception of the novel, the multi-generic structure of the novel, as well as the attention to artifice and audience, have been extensively

and productively explored. However, Woolf's evident interest in performance and class structures remains largely unaddressed. In the context of structures of authority in the novel, whether they are imperialist or class structures, it seems important to trace the relationship between the common folk, the populace of villagers, as players and the gentry as audience. As with imperialism and fascism, the class relationship has a direct impact on Woolf's play with genre and ideology in the novel.

Popular culture is generally understood in opposition to an elitist art culture, and in *Between the Acts* this class relationship is maintained and simultaneously critiqued. The villagers' roles in the pageant are of course satiric representations, stock characters from past theatricals, but the reflexivity of this parodic mode of representation is highlighted by the characterization of the villagers themselves. Albert the id[illegible], Mrs. Ball the slattern, Bond the cowman, all of the villagers in Woolf's novel seem in themselves to be parodies of a clichéd village life. The language of the villagers and the household's servants requires a translation between the drawing room of Pointz Hall and its kitchen, or between Pointz Hall generally and the town. The audience-performer structure of La Trobe's pageant itself adopts a clearly class-based model, and La Trobe is a leader, or dictator, to the chaotic and earthy village folk. The novel establishes class distinctions as

the basis of the performance -- popular culture literally at the service of the elite.

However, as many critics have noted, Woolf's project in *Between the Acts* is to undermine explicitly this barrier between audience and performers. This strategy of transgression employed by art culture would also seem to transgress the novel's class distinctions. But does Miss La Trobe's play, as performed by the villagers, constitute a performance of an incomprehensible and elitist art culture, or does it unite the divided classes of village and hall? The pageant certainly contains a critique of Tradition embodied in the lineage of theatre as Great Art, but its parody seems to suggest that this lineage has populist, or perhaps better defined as middle-class, origins. The Renaissance drama, eighteenth-century sex farce, and the Gilbert and Sullivan operetta are reduced to their manifest clichés as are the characters of the villagers. The audience is also revealed, even in privilege, to have the inconsistent but blindingly conventional sensibilities of a middle-class consumer audience. The critical neglect of Woolf's analysis of class-structure in *Between the Acts* is difficult to account for. Since feminist, anti-authoritarian and even postcolonial readings of the novel abound, why has the schism so continually reinforced between the villagers (and the servants) and the inhabitants of Pointz Hall (and their friends and neighbours) been resolutely ignored? Perhaps because a systematic examination of the relationship between

class structures and art would yield a hopeless construction of both. Certainly if the critics who champion Woolf for her critique of dominant ideologies and message of social community or unification take into account her examination of class, they would also be forced to concede that though the pageant (art) has the temporary effect of uniting the audience, the audience is only comprised of gentry. That is, the pageant unites the villagers in performance and the audience in reception, but the performers remain excluded from the watching community. The upper classes are brought together briefly by the pageant, but the villagers remain exclusively outside its sphere of influence.

From the beginning, the characters who act in the play are distinct from those characters who form its audience. Miss La Trobe is the mediating force between the players and the audience, and she is herself neither of the village nor of Pointz Hall. As an unsuccessful artist and as a lesbian, she is an outsider to both social spheres. As a bridge between the villagers and the inhabitants of Pointz Hall, Miss La Trobe has a checkered history: "Rumour said that she had kept a tea-shop at Winchester; that had failed. She had been an actress; that had failed. She had bought a four-roomed cottage and shared it with an actress. They had quarreled. . . . [she] used rather strong language -- perhaps, then, she wasn't altogether a lady?" (*BA* 46). She is allied with the villagers by profession, the tea-shop, and by her "strong language", but the assumption remains that by

virtue of her passion as an artist, she is something (if not altogether) of a lady. The actors from the village own small shops, work at the post-office or simply live in relative poverty in cottages, but they are briefly distinguished in the pageant.

All the characters in *Between the Acts* are sometimes described as caricatures by critics, and while this may be true of all, it is certainly true of the villagers. In fact, the notion of subjectivity circulating throughout the novel is very like that in *Façade* or *Four Saints*. Though the characters do motivate a narrative line (or a series of them), they are largely constructed of conflicting discourses. The discourses that define the villagers are clichéd in their familiarity, and this deliberate repetition of very familiar material reveals subjectivity not only as an artificial (and mobile because contradictory) construct, but also as a class-based construct. Identified only by occupation, the villagers' lack of character traits is reinforced by their roles in the play. By juxtaposing each character with the other, the narrative reveals both to be artifice, deliberately undeveloped: "From behind the bushes issued Queen Elizabeth -- Eliza Clark, licensed to sell tobacco. Could she be Mrs. Clark of the village shop? . . . She could reach a flitch of bacon or haul a tub of oil with one sweep of her arm in the shop. For a moment she stood there, eminent, dominant, on the soap box with the blue sailing clouds behind her" (64). Mrs. Clark's character is a

performance of dual identity: she constitutes a parody of Queen Elizabeth because she is a commoner dressed as a queen, and this contradictory pairing is doubled in her name (Eliza/ Queen and Clark/ clerk). This juxtaposition gives her character its comedy, but the comedy is only achieved because Mrs. Eliza Clark is herself a stereotype of the commoner. Her power as the representation of a queen is reduced, ridiculed by being compared to her power in the tobacco shop. The element of caricature that defines the villagers in their limited roles reinforces the separation between the apparently occupationless audience. As well, it defines character as a mobile collection of discursive associations -- mobile because they induce laughter. This separation is an operation of genre, or language. The discourse that describes "village folk" effectively keeps them in their place in the narrative, and yet the narrative is unsettled since by pointing to their ludicrous positions within the pageant, the characterizations of the villagers also point out their own absurdity. Each description is ridiculous by contrast (Queen/ clerk). Even when the character from the town acts his own part, the audience is disturbed by the display. Albert, the village idiot, "came, acting his part to perfection" (66) He needs no costume. But a member of the audience is distressed: "Suppose he suddenly did something dreadful? There he was pinching the Queen's skirts" (67). The blatant caricature is frightening in its representation because the potential for excess is ever

present. These characters are not stable; either they combine dual properties or their s' gular property threatens to exceed its boundaries, defined by convention.

Once again, however, this hierarchical separation is highlighted through a focus on language in the narrative. The villagers and the gentry do not speak the same language in the novel, and this discursive boundary is reinforced throughout the narrative: "the cat rubbed itself this way, that way against the table legs, against her legs. She [Mrs. Sands, the cook] would save a slice for Sunny -- his drawing-room name Sung-Yen had undergone a kitchen change into Sunny. . . . the house before the Reformation, like so many houses in that neighbourhood, had a chapel; and the chapel had become a larder, changing like the cat's name, as religion changed" (27). Within the house language undergoes a transformation or translation between drawing-room and kitchen, and this transformation is politicized by its relation to the Reformation when not only the name changed but the function of the space as well (from chapel to larder). Between the village and Pointz Hall there is apparently no space for a transformation of language: "Mrs. Ebury had forbidden Fanny to act because of the nettle-rash. There was another name in the village for nettle-rash" (50). The narrator never reveals the other name for nettle-rash. This reticence indicates the power of maintaining discursive boundaries (and perhaps proprieties). In the gentry's

relationship with the villagers, the unarticulated or untranslatable functions as the unknown.

Defiance of convention may effect something of a translation between the world of the players and that of the audience. A potential space for crossovers between the gulf that separates the classes exists on the stage. There the elements of the kitchen defy convention and are thereby transformed into finery. The costume for Elizabeth is "made of cloth of silver -- in fact swabs used to scour saucepans" (*BA* 64): "Ten pounds was the limit. Thus conventions were outraged. Swathed in conventions, they couldn't see, as she could, that a dish cloth wound round a head in the open looked much richer than real silk" (51). Just as Miss La Trobe takes the conventions from the Great Tradition of dramatic art and outrages them through parody, so she takes the conventions of costume and outrages them by dressing down opulence into the "language" of the kitchen. In this way, towels signify towels, but they also represent silk turbans. The materials of the kitchen are transformed through performance, through the violation of convention, into a language that communicates with the audience. The necessity for transformation of discourse, for multiplied signification, informs the entire novel. The characterization of villagers also takes part in this drive for difference: Eliza Clark is and is not the Queen, and Albert the Idiot is and is not the Idiot. Removed from their conventional contexts, the traits (discourses, words) that

make up character are forced to mean something else, or to mean simultaneously. Further, objects which appeared to have no meaning at all (scouring pads) now take on two, simultaneous and contradictory. Though represented solely through language, this suggestion for transformative, multidisciplinary discourse has, as in *Façade* and *Four Saints*, political implications. Sleepy structures of class are demolished and rebuilt into a more flexible and variable form.

Shifting dialogues of genre

Most critics of *Between the Acts* are preoccupied with thematic representations of dialogue, indeterminacy, intertextuality and general disruption of fixed notions of authority and language. Nevertheless, some critics have studied Woolf's experiments with form, particularly her emphasis on narrative repetitions and gaps. These fragmentations have been explored as expressions of the novel's discussion of gender issues. That is, gender is also the subject of critique in the novel: those monologic structures that Woolf's narrative seeks to undermine or parody are explicitly represented as structures connected with the operation of patriarchy. In opposition to this trend in feminist studies, some feminist critics interpret *Between the Acts* as a rewriting of classical, though matriarchal, mythology (Patricia Cramer, Melba Cuddy-Keane, Eileen Barrett, Sandra Shattuck, and Patricia Maika). While

all these critics trace a productive line between Jane Harrison's revision of mythology and Woolf's experiments with notions of authority and performance, their studies continue the tradition of mythological criticism established by critics like Northrop Frye. These studies attempt to trace a historical lineage, a European Ur-text, underlying Woolf's disjointed and almost postmodern novel while neglecting the textual experiments that would seem to contradict any notion of narrative authority or any privileging of narrative transparency. On the other hand, the attention that some critics have paid to the language of *Between the Acts* has led to a conception of Woolf's narrative as disrupting the conventional privilege of historical discourse.

Gendered subjectivity is accompanied in Woolf's novel by a reconception of narrative. The novel is governed, in part, by a conflict between the necessity and impossibility of naming and by its assumption of a linear narrative form while positing a looser associational model. Both of these narrative collisions are located in one character, though they leak out into the narrative in general (for example, the collapse of representation as language refuses to cross class barriers). Lucy Swithin, among the different women in the novel, exemplifies both the avoidance of linear narrative and the preoccupation with naming. Undefined in the narrative, she moves from subject position to subject position through multiple naming, and her nonlinear thought processes often drive the narrative and act as a loose model for an

alternative narrative process: "'The sandwiches . . .' said Mrs. Swithin, coming into the kitchen. She refrained from adding 'Sands' to 'sandwiches,' for Sand and sandwiches clashed. 'Never play,' her mother used to say, 'on people's names.'" (*BA* 28). The novel itself disregards this motherly advice, treating naming as a form of play directly related to the nature of representation in language. Lucy, like many of the characters in the novel, has many names: of course Lucy and Mrs. Swithin, but also "Cindy" (19) and "Old Flimsy" (24). Each of these names approaches the character's identity from a different direction or discourse. Lucy seems to be associated with her own naming of herself, her inner life, while Mrs. Swithin is her social identity. Cindy is Bart's patronizing assessment of her, while Old Flimsy is the villagers' name for her vague and wandering ways. These alternative names draw attention not only to a multiple notion of subjectivity but specifically to a notion of subjectivity constructed in language. The naming activity of narrative is disrupted through the manipulation of characters' names, and their multiple identities in language. The narrative in fact plays with people's names in such a way that their roles in the narrative are momentarily confused. By switching without explanation from one name to another, the narrative disrupts not only the representational function of language but also the function of stable character identities in narrative. Cause-and-effect logic, individual motivation are suspended with the introduction of confusion

of identity: "Mrs. Swithin loosed and lowered her fixed look and said: 'It's very unsettled. It'll rain, I'm afraid. We can only pray,' she added, and fingered her crucifix. 'And provide umbrellas,' said her brother. Lucy flushed. He had struck her faith" (21). The disorientation associated with the narrative confusion of naming reinforces the fissures in the narrative structure. As the ability of a word to represent a stable entity is questioned in the name, so is it questioned in all namings, proper or not. Language and subjectivity are revealed here to be constructed by a variety of associations and not a fixed one-to-one correspondence. As in the other works in this study, the illusion of referential language is disrupted by playing with conventional expectations.

The loose associational nature of naming in the narrative is implicitly connected with nonlinear alternatives to narrative structure again through the figure of Lucy. In her brother's estimation, Lucy "would have been . . . a very clever woman had she fixed her gaze. But this led to that; that to the other. What went in at this ear, went out at that" (*BA* 22). Even Lucy's interest in history, or rather prehistory, is removed from a linear context by being interspersed with present-time events. Her associational, rather than linear, conception of historical narratives leads her to make wild juxtapositions, "rhododendron forests in Picadilly" (*BA* 10), which undercut the very notion of linearity in narrative. The narrative structure of *Between*

the Acts follows a similar pattern of association and juxtaposition, but it never lets go of an overall conventional narrative structure, as Miller points out. In the same way, Lucy's favourite reading is an all-encompassing historical narrative, "An Outline of History", even while her imagination disrupts the linear order. More underhandedly than in *Four Saints* but to the same purpose, Woolf's novel establishes conventional generic markers and proceeds to undercut them at the same time. While the narrative follows a rigidly chronological course, each fragmented vignette is only loosely connected by logic with the preceding or following section. The scene which establishes the confusion of identity discussed above has Lucy walking into the room with a hammer, which becomes associated with, or incorporated into Isa's rape narrative (16-23). The following segment (23-25) is a small discourse on "Old Flimsy's" use of the hammer, to nail a placard on the barn, an event which temporally precedes the conversation about umbrellas. Following that section, the narrative returns to the conversation in the library and continues Bart's action of looking something up in the encyclopedia (25-27). Though the overall thrust of the narrative is chronological, each section is tangentially related to the one before, nd this relationship may be motivated by an association introduced but not explored in the preceding segment (for example, the hammer). As well, the segment here which forms an interval

between the two "present time" narratives actually digresses, goes back in time and off topic by association.

The relationship between this associational technique and the wider discursive considerations of the novel is established from the beginning: "Then there was a silence; and a cow coughed; and that led her to say how odd it was, as a child, she had never feared cows, only horses. But, then, as a small child in a perambulator, a great cart-horse had brushed within an inch of her face. Her family, she told the old man in the arm-chair [Bart], had lived near Liskard for many centuries. There were graves in the church-yard to prove it" (7). The first page of the novel not only leaves a moment of silence open to the sounds of non-human discourse, but it reveals the incorporation of that discourse into human language. That is, as soon as the cow's cough is referred to in the narrative, it becomes an element of the art. It is an act of artifice just as the dialogue is an act of artifice. In the narrative of a novel, there can be no split between Nature and Culture. Every spoken thing is culture. Just as landscape is narrativized on this same page, so are the sounds of nature incorporated into an explicitly historical discourse. The cow's cough only "means" when it is drawn into the woman's associational thought/ speech process. The cow sound is associated with a fact/ event of her childhood, and this historical narrative becomes associated with another, her ancestors', related not by an explicit cause-effect logic, but by an associational movement. The cow-

sound *refers* to nothing. Instead, its presence in the narrative, though explicitly discursive, is a fragment of discourse balanced or juxtaposed with another fragment -- each tenuously, sometimes mysteriously, connected with the other.

The dramatic structure of the narrative, its attention to generic overlaps between theatre and fiction, is exemplified in its attitude towards silence, words and dialogue. The importance and impossibility of naming and the emphasis on associational meaning suggests a fundamental ambivalence towards language. This ambivalence is directly represented in the narrative and indirectly through narrative structure. If naming, whether through historical narratives or proper names associated with social discourses, can be oppressive, then silence is the least oppressive alternative. But silence, once named, becomes part of the naming process. Even non-language alternatives in the narrative become discursive as soon as they are included in narrative. Thus, narrative as a process of naming is a dangerous procedure. Naming as an oppressive act can only be evaded in narrative by undermining its own representation, and *Between the Acts* offers a model of narrative evasion by suggesting that the entire narrative is a variable fabric of dialogues. That is, it establishes certain generic conventions: fiction, which would have dialogue and narrative as separate, with narrative carrying greater authority, and drama, which would have dialogue as the conveyer of narrative through discrete

associations with distinct characters. The distinctions implicit in those generic conventions are blurred through a narrative strategy which employs dialogue throughout the narrative and across characters. Just as the dialogue in Stein's play is largely prosaic, the narrative of Woolf's novel is almost entirely dialogic. The novel, in a sense, provides a language equivalent of the dialogic relations enacted in both *Façade* and *Four Saints*. The absence of actual performance and musical discourses, replaced by their conflicted representation in the narrative, leads to a crucial ambiguity in the fabric of the novel. The novel experiments with a similar narrative disruption as *Four Saints*, establishing and then violating generic boundaries. All three works explore, to greater or lesser degrees, the explicitly discursive limitations of ideology, whether gender, colonial, racial or class ideology. And all three works question the very representative power of the word. Sitwell's and Woolf's language proposes silence as an occasional alternative to the paradoxes of the word-without-signified, but in both their works, the paradox remains the central expression.

Words Without Meaning

We have seen how Woolf's exploration of monologic discourses reveals their oppressive nature, and that they can be disrupted simply through representation and juxtaposition. However, *Between the Acts* takes the battle with words a bit

further than either Sitwell or Stein. Woolf's narrative represents language as not only oppressive, ambiguous or inadequate, but also threatening, dangerous: "Words this afternoon ceased to lie flat in the sentence. They rose, became menacing and shook their fists at you" (47). Words in this passage have a kinetic or tactile nature that exceeds the apparent tame fixity of textuality. This movement of words seems, on the one hand, to render language performative, and on the other hand, to increase the meaning potential of language: "Words raised themselves and became symbolical. 'The cradle of our race,' she seemed to say" (56). In the second example, the "symbolic" nature of words is apparently equivalent to the status of the monologic discourse, in this case a racial and historical discourse. The hostility of words is associated with the pageant and young England personified as the figure of a young girl (Phyllis Jones from the village): "Her words peppered the audience as with a shower of hard little stones" (61). In this example words are literally, in the fictional world, performative. Their threat is directly linked to their place in the performance, confronting the audience. This direct interaction with the audience is made more explicit in the relationship between Words and Giles during the play: "A moral. What? Giles supposed it was: Where there's a Will there's a Way. The words rose and pointed a finger of scorn at him" (109). Giles' own narrative, his history of infidelity, appears to intersect here with the narrative of

the play, and that crossover attacks Giles' conception of himself. The final rising of the words is associated with a kind of rebirth of language which is directly opposed to the finger pointing, fist shaking, symbolical nature of the words in the pageant or in earlier bits of the narrative: "Words of one syllable sank down into the mud. She drowsed; she nodded. The mud became fertile. Words rose above the intolerably laden dumb oxen plodding through the mud. Words without meaning -- wonderful words" (153). Of course, this creative vision posits the impossible, a language without meaning. As this supreme "language" rises, it passes the very oxen who had earlier provided a language to continue the emotion of an empty stage, but now they are silent. This final description of the performative nature of words highlights the conflicted nature of language throughout the narrative. While language is the stuff of the novel, it can exist in no other medium, it is also the stuff that drags it down. The monologic, the symbolical is threatening because of its certainty, but equally, words without meaning, without some fleeting symbolic element, cannot exist. Thus, the novel is concerned with the performative function of words: the traces of emotion and the movement engendered by association rather than the fixity of reference.

Words do not trace a movement of association by themselves alone, but by their exchange in dialogue. The very idea of dialogue becomes complicated in this novel, and not only through generic manipulation. The characters

experience countless unspoken and half-articulated conversations, which fade into emotional currents, but this fading takes place on a continuum from the representational to the associational:

> Mrs Haines was aware of the emotion circling them, excluding her. She waited, as one waits for the strain of an organ to die out before leaving the church. In the car going home to the red villa in the cornfields, she would destroy it, as a thrush pecks the wing off a butterfly. Allowing ten seconds to intervene, she rose; paused; and then, as if she had heard the last strain die out, offered Mrs. Giles Oliver her hand (9).

The emotion that circles Isa (Mrs. Giles Oliver) and the gentleman farmer (Mr. Haines) carries the quality of unspoken dialogue. Or rather, the unarticulated desire that lies between them is akin to the semi-signifying quality of a dying strain of music. Silence, as represented in the narrative, is always pregnant with some kind of meaning though it may not be referential. In the novel in general, it appears that these tenuous threads of unspoken dialogue, emotion analogous to music, form the alliance between characters that no "real" music or dialogue can sustain.

Believing herself to be in love with Mr. Haines, Isa analyses the character of her feeling, again (like the fellow's wife) in musical, turning to aeronautical, terms:

> 'In love' she must be; since the presence of his body in the room last night could so affect her; since the words

> he said handing her a teacup, handing her a tennis racquet, could so attach themselves to a certain spot in her; and thus lie between them like a wire, tingling, tangling, vibrating -- she groped in the depths of the looking-glass, for a word (15).

Physical experience exceeds words yet continually relies on them. His words do not represent the connection she feels, nor can she find her own word for it. Instead, the words rise up finding kinetic, aural metaphors for their expression. The language works in by-routes rather than direct reference. A similar thread connects Isa's husband Giles with Mrs. Manresa, though it loses the aural resonance of Isa's metaphor (45). The threads that connect voices to their bodies, or to their representation of their bodies, are the associations drawn in narrative, and are felt by the author-within-the-novel Miss La Trobe: "Over the tops of the bushes came stray voices, voices without bodies, symbolical voices they seemed to her, half hearing, seeing nothing, but still, over the bushes, feeling invisible threads connecting the bodiless voices" (111). This is a similar experience to the writer of fiction whose audience is inaccessible and half heard or hearing.

In fact, these disjointed, disembodied, half-silenced voices that make up the narrative, and the unspoken or unspeakable connections between characters provide the fabric of the narrative. The mixing of genres and the crossing of dialogue into narrative (or narrative into dialogue),

discussed above in the context of imperialism, are obvious examples of ways in which the fabric of the novel is woven from dialogue. But through this dialogic energy, through the displacement of desire, the narrative is able to momentarily escape the symbolic power of words, leaving ideas gestured towards or alluded to but unspoken. Isa finds herself comforted by the symbolic function of words since they serve to ground her identity: "love for her husband the stockbroker -- 'The father of my children,' she added, slipping into the cliché conveniently provided by fiction" (14). But she, like everyone in the novel, floats free of those grounding clichés or confining discourses. William Dodge is in a particularly dangerous position in relation to identity and language: "simply a------" (48). Unidentifiable in language (as a gay man) and without identity in mainstream culture, Dodge is an example of the treacherous nature of words as well as an opportunity for escape. His situation is recognized not only by Giles in the above quotation, by Isa and by William himself: "I'm half-man, Mrs. Swithin; a flickering, mind-divided snake in the grass, Mrs. Swithin; as Giles saw; but you've healed me . . .' So he wished to say; but said nothing" (57). The narrative's avoidance of identifying William points once again to the reductive nature of naming, but in this case a kind of unfixed and provisional identity is forged for William by means of association and implication. His desire for Giles, lack of desire for Isa, and his "half-man" status all point to his positive desire

unrepresentable in language. The displacement of William's desire traces an open space in the symbolic language of text, and that open space, while alluded to, shifts continuously. Never confining or defining, never meaningless, the words which do *not* define William rise up and become mobile.

With the pageant as the central event, and Miss La Trobe/ Ethel Smyth as the figure of the artist, *Between the Acts* is a narrative description of the kind of experiments in which the collaborators on *Four Saints in Three Acts* and *Façade* were engaged. Beyond the description of performance art and interaction between disciplines, however, Woolf's late modernist novel enacts the end of its own act as a performance in narrative. The narrative disrupts its own conventional expectations with the violation of distinct disciplinary categories, whether of dialogue and narration, or imperialism, class and gender The signifiers of the novel, while maintaining a relatively realist narrative, float free, to some extent, of their conventional function, circulating in association with one another. This suspension of naming, and activity of association, also disrupts the singular progressive or linear thrust of the narrative, confined as it is to the passing of twenty-four or so hours. Thus, while not engaged in its own interdisciplinary or collaborative manifestation, *Between the Acts* ruminates about the nature of such modernist experiments. It is a novel which exists in an interval, before the first act, and which questions its own ability to speak.

Conclusion

The notes rang out in a prelude of unfinished phrases -- the kind, Miriam noted, that had so annoyed her father in what he called new-fangled music -- she felt it was going to be a brilliant piece -- fireworks -- execution -- style . . . .

Dorothy Richardson *Pilgrimage*

When the cadence changed, when it was repeated on a lower key, she knew that Robin was singing of a life that she herself had no part in; snatches of harmony as tell-tale as the possessions of a traveler from a foreign land; songs of a practiced whore who turns away from no one but the one who loves her. Sometimes Nora would sing them after Robin, with the trepidation of a foreigner repeating words in an unknown language.

Djuna Barnes *Nightwood*

"'Myself' -- she looked a little prigishly at her piano -- 'I would not care to allege that any sound had so simple a meaning.'"

Rebecca West *Harriet Hume*

The relationship between Edith Sitwell, Gertrude Stein and Virginia Woolf is tenuous in historical evidence of influence but substantial in attitudes towards language and performance. All three women maintained friendships with composers which influenced the direction of their evolving "rebuilding" of language, and all three were influenced by or involved with a greater arts community whose focus was on the performance and recombination of conventional and ideologically loaded discourses. In disrupting the accepted authority of language as transparent representation, these writers indirectly proposed a flexible model of signification -- a model which allowed for a greater dialogue between diverse discourses than had been previously admitted in

conventional, disciplined art and language practices. The overlapping currents of art movements created an atmosphere of openness to collaboration and experimentation as well as a reconception of the nature of representation. As the symbolists, themselves influenced by the far reaches of Romantic experiments in musical form, pointed out, the recombination of perceptual experience creates both a re-understanding of that experience and of the language which purports to represent it. The cubists and French post-impressionist composers also recombined discourses of representation to highlight the very function of representation. The fragmentation and juxtaposition of discursive units in a painting by Pablo Picasso (or even Cezanne or a piece by Erik Satie reveals the repetitions of visual or musical "codes" to be artificial. The perceptual world beyond the representative function of language is, in the first four decades of the twentieth century, collapsed and recombined in defiance of "natural" laws and assumptions of meaning. These experiments, combined with the writers' alliances with composers, allow for a language that enacts a similar fragmentation and recombination of conventional discursive units. The defiance of assumptions of narrative authority, through collaboration and disruption of representation, is finally a gesture of performance. The movement of language is rerouted from an absent/ present reference to self-reference, and that movement unsettles the

concrete expectation of representation. The word is cut loose from the thing and made mobile.

Primarily, I have suggested that these collaborative or narrative experiments attempt, or propose, an antidisciplinary and performative art. The methodology for this analysis depends on an assumption by Sitwell, Stein and Woolf of the limits of discursive categories. The word as a limited and concrete container of reference is questioned in their work, but along with the questioning of the word's limitations, comes the disruption of ideological and disciplinary boundaries. That is, disciplines are ideologically loaded, and when the borders that keep disciplines distinct from one another are transgressed, ideology is also thrown into relief. Thus, along with the basic slippage between musical discourses and language discourses, itself transgressive, these works offer a more general questioning of disciplinary discourses, such as gender and race. For all three writers, the issues of subjectivity and identity are linked with the border-crossing impulse of their internal dialogues. The subject, unified in the discourses of conventional gender or race identity, is in these works fractured, fragmented, and made to play out its own contradictions. Similarly, the limitations of genre conventions are put on display and thereby questioned: if genre also serves as a disciplinary ideology, it too is transgressed in *Façade*, *Four Saints in Three Acts* and *Between the Acts*.

This project has proposed that collaboration is a largely productive act, and that dialogue between discourses serves to multiply, not contain, their possibilities. An entirely different attitude towards these collaborations could be taken. There remains, after my project, the very real possibility for an interpretation of these works as engaged in a struggle for discursive dominance. That is, the composers' contributions may be in direct conflict with the writers: the musical discourses may in fact attempt to limit and contain the language and generic discourses. I am inclined to think, however, that the conflicts between musical and language discourses are more the expression of a half-suppressed impulse towards tyranny in both writers and composers (as in the character of Miss La Trobe) than a struggle for dominance between them. In the end, dialogue is not without shifting hierarchies, but it is without a final, triumphant victor.

Of course, narrative, language and music are always the subject of experiment, and in the modernist canon of writers, that experiment takes a relatively consistent performative tone. James Joyce, William Butler Yeats, T.S. Eliot and a host of other "big names" maintained interests in music, theatre and the nature of narrative or poetic language. Modernist literary projects consistently undermine the assumption of representation, offering language as itself opaque and objectified. The poems of Yeats and Eliot, like Joyce's narratives, question the authority and transparency

of language, and they disrupt uncomplicated notions of tradition, myth, nationalism and history. However, I would argue that in their reinvention of signifying practices, many canonical modernists (including Woolf, at times) actually confirm the authority of language over experience. By expanding its perameters, these writers assume that language is more encompassing. In many of the women writers of the same period, language loses importance as a representation of specular control and shifts to an awareness of more flexible modes of perception and representation. The collaborations that Sitwell, Stein and Woolf participate in or allude to gesture outside the perameters of the word, and outside the confines of the concrete, the observable, the representable. In these projects, these women suggest the potential for a feminist modernist aesthetic that exceeds language, offering a multitude of discourses in its stead.

The three analyses gathered here in this project might be expanded in scope to include not only other products of these collaborations, but also other collaborations altogether. In *Mother of Us All* as well as several of Stein's poems, Virgil Thomson set Stein's words to significantly different though no less interesting effect than *Four Saints in Three Acts*. Sitwell's *Gold Coast Customs* was set to music by Humphrey Searle, and several of her poems, including "Still Falls the Rain," were set by Benjamin Britten. In a letter to Britten, Sitwell also refers to an opera version of *English Eccentrics* composed by Malcolm

Williamson. Even excerpts from Virginia Woolf's *Diary* were set, after her death, as songs in a very interesting arrangement by Dominick Argento. Thus, the relationship of text to music, outside of active collaboration, can be traced throughout the careers of these, and of course many other, writers. As well, this theory of influence and multiple signification could be productively extended to include other experiments in collaboration, such as that between Benjamin Britten and W.H. Auden. Not only is this collaboration one between an influential modernist composer and poet, but also many of their works address similar issues, ideological and aesthetic, to those addressed by *Façade*, *Four Saints* and *Between the Acts*. In *Billy Budd*, for example, not only music and language, but the nature of authority, race and gender come under scrutiny.

The emphasis here on crossing disciplinary boundaries, as a political gesture as well as an aesthetic one, lends itself to a wider range of multiple media than even opera. Women modernists were involved in any number of multimedia projects that need to be examined for their influence on ideological conceptions of discourse and representation. For example, H.D.'s involvement in the film *Borderline* (1930) as actor and critic, exemplifies the diversity of women's involvement in experimentation in the arts during the modernist time period. The film is about, as H.D. suggests, border crossings -- of gender, nationality, race and media. Of the film, directed by Kenneth Macpherson, she says, "I

have said that Kenneth Macpherson touches the various 'stops' and focus appliances of his beautiful camera like a violinist. And that presents another parallel. I have said that in the film alone can the pictorial arts be welded. They can in addition, be *wedded* and to a separate art form. And that form, music. But here we are on difficult ground; speaking of one art in terms of another always seems the hall-mark of the [eighteen]'nineties or of facile dilettantism. Yet it is perhaps as necessary today for the modernist artist to endeavour to shock weary sensibilities as it was for the so-called 'effete' of that generation" (in Scott 116-117). Film can *be* music as well as be wedded to it, she goes on to argue, specifically through the rhythms of editing. *Borderline*, says H.D., is a film of unexpected and unconventional rhythms. H.D.'s early arguments for the importance of film as a medium of artistic expression, as well as her criticism of the tendency for film to objectify images of women (anticipating later developments in feminist film theory; see "Joan of Arc", for example) suggests that this multi-generic art form offers a more flexible forum for the exchange of discourse than literature, painting or music alone. H.D.'s emphasis on rhythm also allies her with all three of the writers discussed in this study.

The epigraphs at the head of this conclusion, along with *Borderline*, are the beginnings for a theory of an antidisciplinary feminist modernist aesthetic. A current of interest in multi-genre and multi-discourse art runs through

the work of many innovative women writers in the modernist era. Dorothy Richardson, Djuna Barnes, Rebecca West, and even Vita Sackville-West join, inadvertently no doubt, with Sitwell, Stein and Woolf in conceiving of an anti-authoritarian, antidisciplinary and antipatriarchal writerly method. The unfinished phrases the father hates in *Pilgrimage* echo not only thematically through the novel, but also stylistically. Richardson's narrative, featuring ellipses and lacunae, enacts the collection of unfinished phrases, characterizing modernity and hated by "father". As well, Djuna Barnes's narrative method suggested by the wild, whorish songs resembles a collage, with her fragmentation, her preoccupation with dis- and re-membering, and her emphasis on the figure of the wandering foreigner, lost in the dark without language. Rebecca West develops a character in Harriet Hume who crosses subjective boundaries (she's telepathic) and disciplinary boundaries (she's a pianist who speaks through music). The narrative of the novel of the same name is disrupted continually by fantasy segments only loosely associated with the main character. That is, realist narrative becomes, under the influence of the modern woman musician, a kind of early magic realism.

Music, for some modernist writers who are also women, seems to operate as a figure for discourse, expressive but almost unspeakable. In their efforts to avoid the limiting rationalism of nineteenth-century fictional narratives, these writers seek to expand notions of meaning and expression

beyond the bounded notions of representation through language. Narrative, for many experimental women writers, is performance, slippery, unfinished and associational. While Richardson, Barnes and West, like Virginia Woolf, chose to incorporate music as a figure whose evocation suggests an accompanying narrative disruption, Sitwell and Stein engaged in an active collaboration with that other discourse. In all these writers, the avoidance of fixed and limiting specularity leads to an emphasis on aural effects and rhythm as well as a resistance of authority, whether of narrative or the father. However, the evasion of conventional narrative or language structures is not reduced to a mythic semiotic babble; instead, discourses are invited and disrupted, marked by their excessive social construction. Language, music, gesture and image are all segmented and recombined in a shifting performance of colliding discourses. Dialogues partially escape the certainties of imperialism, patriarchy, and representation, but in so doing highlight the operation of those ideologies in their fixed frames of reference. Outside those frames, the interchanging discourses engage in a performative excess, if not freedom, of play.

Endnotes

Chapter One: Sliding from Music to Words

1. Performance practice, as a historical discipline of musicology, should not be confused with performance theory. The history of performance practice is designed primarily to aid the player of "old instruments" and "old music" in what they would perceive to be an authentic reconstruction of the piece. As Stoïanova has pointed out, the subject of research for the traditional musicologist is almost never the performed event, but instead the text or the history of performance practice.

2. In his book *The Idea of Absolute Music*, Carl Dahlhaus discusses the importance of Hanslick's contribution to the development of the notion of "absolute music" that serves as the basis for conventional musicology and music theory. As well, in her "Afterword" to Jaques Attali's *Noise*, Susan McClary gives a sense of the influence of Schenker's theories, the major third as the "ersatz" of all music, a kind of transcendent Ur-chord, on the American musicological academy and the academy's influence on the reception of Schenker's ideas: "Schenker's work has been accepted as one of the principle modes of academic analysis in the United States, but only after it was stripped of its ideological trapping. . . . If Schenker silenced the cries of

uncertainty and anguish apparent in the discontinuities of so much nineteenth-century music by showing that it all is -- in the final analysis -- normative and consistent with the laws of God, American Schenkerians have in turn silenced his metaphysical quest" (151-2).

3. Joseph Kerman makes this point in his *Opera as Drama*, which considers the music and the text of opera to be equally dramatic. Though Kerman avoids any commitment to a theory of musical meaning, he also avoids essentializing the forms as techniques of either art form. He maintains their interdependence within a conventional theoretical framework: drama as conflict and catharsis, both in music and language.

4. Taking at once a behaviorist and Romantic approach, Terence McLaughlin suggests that musical expression is achieved through a physiological synaesthesia: certain sounds are instantly associated with certain feelings (or colours) in the brain, and this association is confirmation of his sense that music "expresses something which is deep and valuable and which can be communicated from the composer to the listener in such a way that it conveys some aspect of the composer's subjective thought" (15). Like McLaughlin, Wilson Coker conceives of a semiotics of music that is physiological in origin: "music is a product of human skill the medium for which consists of characteristics of sound and rhythm, which are selectively organized into sonorous motion that signifies

-- as well as affects -- organic attitudes and other objects and values, either musical or otherwise" (24-5). Music is a gesture that 'means' in terms of kinetic response, though Coker also seems to suggest that music also has a more concrete, objective referential function. Although these theories offer gestures of their own towards interdisciplinary thought, towards a dismissal of distinct discipline boundaries, they fall prey to their own structuralist positivisms and ideological certainties.

5. In a recent book, *The Epistemic Music of Rhetoric*, Steven B. Katz proposes a model of reading based in part on Meyer's notion of affective listening and on reader-response theory. Katz suggests that literature may be perceived by the student not only on a referential level but on an aural level, something like music. Following developments in the New Physics and chaos theory, this musical response to language stems from the reader/ listener's sense making faculty rather than from any meaning inhering in the language itself. In an attempt to avoid what Katz sees as the logocentric bias of New Criticism, he adopts "Ong's understanding of aurality [which] may be able to help us move beyond the 'spatial limitations' of our current methods by allowing us to better understand the nature and relationship of affective response to language as sound" (12). Meyer is invoked along with Susanne Langer (and a host of related theorists) to support the author's main contention: "To reconstruct a temporal

model of reading and writing, we would need nonformalistic, nonrationalistic principles that can more holistically account for affective response to the sound of language in time, principles that may apply at all levels of musico-linguistic experience (word, sentence, paragraph, chapter) and all kinds of rhetorical music (prose, poetry, play; fiction, nonfiction, scientific and technical writing)" (178). While I think Katz's model for reading is interesting and worth pursuing, he does lay the emphasis on reading rather than words and music. He seems rather ambivalent about the notion that music might have a referential function, though he agrees that language may exceed reference through its aurality. As well, though he accurately points out Meyer's assertion that the affective response is learned, and therefore historically informed, Katz does not provide a historical model of the listening subject.

6. Film theory has also been a "way in" to the active social production and ideological inscription of music. Just as images in film carry semantic and ideological association beyond explicit language practices, so is the music inflected in similar ways. In her analysis of the function of music in film, Claudia Gorbman suggests that all music "bears cultural associations", and in film specifically music becomes codified by the images and conventions of the film (3). Following the lead of psychoanalytic film theory, and echoing such theorists as Attali, Gorbman claims that film music in

conventional commercial films renders the listening subject unproblematic, unable to think critically without effort. At the same time, however, film music occupies an inherently ambiguous and shifty position: it is the only element of a conventional commercial film which regularly shifts between diegetic and nondiegetic. Even while it confirms the ideological projection of the film world it unconsciously (as it were) contradicts its status as a "natural" narrative event. Even as it projects a "natural" ideology, for example orchestral music written in a Romantic style slides by unnoticed, the combination of music and spectacle raises the issue of their interdependence.

7. The popularity of the notion of postmodernism has also problematized music's referring capacity, particularly for Emma Kafalenos its capacity for *self*-reference. Kafalenos suggests that self-reference in music and in language theatre are fundamentally opposed, and when contrasted highlight their opposition: "We recognize that in literature and the visual arts the *mise en abyme* is a technique that reduces the level of referentiality: to generate a work from signifiers or icons is already to remove it one step further from reference to any external reality. In music, however, to adopt text as generator, or as *mise en abyme*, is to incorporate semantic material and thus, to some extent, a referential level into a non-referential work" (99). Kafalenos proposes a model of interdisciplinary exchange that

brings the indeterminacy of music to language through the technique of self-reference. When the literary work becomes more about itself than about the outside world, it approaches the quality of music which can only be about itself. When music is self-referential, on the other hand, it points outside itself, to an unexplored capacity of reference. Though this seems like a promising exchange, this theory is based on the traditional binary: words mean, music does not. Self-reference is a means of highlighting the artifice of art, not a confirmation or disaffirmation of referring capacities in themselves.

8. Derrida makes the point that "[i]n the theatre of cruelty, pure visibility is not exposed to voyeurism" ("The Theatre of Cruelty" 235). He implies that voyeurism is part of the theology of "logos" and that it is required for the traditionally limiting effects of theatre. He also implies, however, unlike Shepherd, that the visible is not necessarily subject to voyeurism, thereby saving less conventional theatre from the condemnation that it is voyeuristic.

9. The collection of essays entitled *The Sign in Music and Literature*, edited by Wendy Steiner, offers a less sophisticated analysis of semiotic music theories than Nattiez's. Indeed, many of the naïve New Critical assumptions about musical purity and the fixed meaning of words are retained in these articles. Steiner's introduction

makes the position on meaning clear from the outset: "The arts treated -- particularly literature and music -- have a good deal in common, but what separates them -- the absence of semantic reference -- would seem at first glance to stop semiotics in its tracks" (3). One of the contributors, Henry Orlov, defines music as "the purest system of abstract relationships presented in concrete form, and the most immediate expression of meaning" (131) and sees its components, sounds, as freestanding, "referring to nothing but its own experienced reality" (135). Other semioticians have imposed on musical grammar a model of transformational-generative syntax in an attempt to ally music with language at its root. For example, in "Forms of Repetition in Music and Literature", Mihály Szegedy-Maszák suggests that one of the "universals" of language acquisition, repetition, might be used to propose a comparative basis for music and language. Ultimately the structuralist approach is not satisfying to the antidisciplinary critic because even as it proposes a basis for the comparison of language and music, it reinforces the assumptions underlying their disciplinary division. The textual model of Mowitt is the only (post)semiotic treatment of language and music that deals with multiplicity, performance (as opposed to writing), ideology and variability.

10. Brown's point is partially made, though without the context of poststructuralist criticism, as early as 1960 in

Donald Ferguson's *Music As Metaphor*. Ferguson argues that both words and music exist as metaphors; that is, they "stand" in for a nonverbal experience and that any form of expression is a kind of translation.

11. Stewart uses the phrase "sound defects" (part of a title for an article on Virginia Woolf's novel *The Waves*) as an example of this process: obviously based on the phrase 'sound effects', the overlap of the "d" sound creates a kind of pun -- an oscillation (to use Stewart's terminology) between the semantic implications of effect and defect.

12. This energetic drive seems similar to the model of theatre proposed by Jean-François Lyotard, inspired, like Derrida, by the writings of Artaud. Lyotard proposes an "energetic theatre" where Barthes would have voice and Stewart transegmental drift.

In conventional "theatre," the person with the toothache digs her nails into her palm creating the illusion of representation or cause and effect -- the tooth motivates or is represented by the palm. But in an alternative theater, an alternative view of signification "puts us potentially into a non-hierarchical circulation, where the tooth and the palm no longer have a relationship of illusion and truth, cause and effect, signifier and signified (or vice versa), but they coexist, independently as transitory investments, accidentally composing a constellation halted for an incant,

an actual multiplicity of stops in the circulation of energy. The tooth and the palm no longer mean anything, they are forces, intensities, present affects" (Lyotard, "The Tooth, The Palm" 109). In this avant-garde theatre (though Lyotard expands his notion of the "libidinal economy" to cover all aspects of signification), production of meaning is necessarily discontinuous. It "works over" a text to render it conventionally unreadable. Lyotard's notion of the "sublime" in the work of the avant-garde is similar in effect: "The art object no longer lends itself to models, but tries to present the fact that there is an unrepresentable" ("The Sublime and the Avant-garde" *The Inhuman* 101). This feeling of the "nowness" of the sublime is an "aesthetic feeling [which] presupposes something . . . necessarily implied, and forgotten, in representation: *presentation*, the fact that something is *there now*" ("Something Like: 'Communication . . . Without Communication'" *The Inhuman* 111). The unrepresentable of the avant-garde shares this quality of "presentation" (perhaps the same quality Derrida is looking for in Artaud) with music -- or rather with the activity of listening or performance. The apprehension of musical meaning or forms takes place at the expense of this temporal flow: appearance "is due to a synthesis, that of apprehension, which as it were hems the edges of the pure flow and makes discontinuous the pure continuum of the flow while making continue the pure discontinuity of its supposed elements" ("God and the Puppet" *The Inhuman* 159). The

musical "text" is at the far end of this continuum of "flow". It participates in social discourse, it can be "hemmed" after all, but its processes of signification are in continuous movement.

This notion of undifferentiated "flow" of time and sensual experience is implicitly connected with Lyotard's theory of "libidinal economy". The libido, Lyotard suggests, inhabits all enunciations, all elements or moments of discourse, and its effects resemble something like a continuous stream of energy variably and diversely articulated. This libidinal energy is evidenced by its disruption of representation, though not by negating representation. Though perceivable by its effects, this flow of energy is indescribable insofar as to describe is to articulate, to represent: "this temporality is not continuous and linear but singular and evanescent. Any 'point' or 'region' of the libidinal band is thus not only spatially indescribable, but has disappeared by the time the language that describes it would attempt that description" (Bennington 21). Nevertheless, the operation of the libidinal is not opposed to theatrical representation: "if the theatre is in fact a product of libidinal energy itself, then its apparent opposition to that energy is also part of the energy itself, one of its transformations" (25). The libidinal process of displacement is always in operation in every act of signification; however, the degree of its disruption or

containment varies depending on the level of articulation in the event.

This movement of desire and displacement is analogous to the act of "transformation" in the 'dream-work' ("The Dream-work Does Not Think" *The Lyotard Reader* 21). The dream is not an example of the opaque representation of unconscious contents, but instead "it is desire working over the text of the dream thoughts" (24). The process of transformation carries over into other textual articulations besides the dream and sounds rather like the process Stewart describes in his transegmental drift: "In what does this transgression consist? In condensation itself! To squeeze signifiers and signifieds together, mixing them up, is to neglect the stable distance separating the letters and words of a text, to scorn the distinctive, invariable graphemes of which they are composed, not to recognize, in a word, the space of discourse. This space, pure and empty, plane of pure oppositions, does not appear by itself" (24). The "neutral" spaces of script specify all elements of language and enable us to read or hear, but the text is worked over by desire; its state is changed through condensation and it takes on a figurative, sensual, haunted dimension: "Now this mobility which manufactures things out of words, is it not desire itself, pursuing its usual course, producing the imaginary? If this is the case, then we should not say that condensation is an exercise by means of which desire disguises itself, but rather that it is desire working over the text of the dream-

thought" (24). The figure 'jams' the operation of communication. The dream work operates through figuration which is not an articulated discourse but a haunting by the physical of the discursive: "Desire does not manipulate an intelligible text in order to disguise it; it does not let the text get in, forestalls it, inhabits it, and we never have anything but a worked-over text, a mixture of the readable and visible" (51). Through his notion of the dream-work and the operation, through desire, of the figure in language, Lyotard demonstrates an underlying connective energy between all articulated events. The event is given meaning through an activity of displacement, a physical tracing of desire. And the transformation of text is revealed to be a process of more or less specific figuration -- or "designation" (28) -- rather than signification.

13. Unless otherwise indicated, all italics in quotations are present in the original.

Chapter Three: "Something Lies Beyond the Scene"

1."Aubade," for example, which first appeared in *Saturday Westminster Gazette* in 1920, was included in the first edition of *Façade* (1922) but then shifted to *Bucolic Comedies* in 1923. "The Bat" (never in the performed versions) was included in the printed versions of *Façade* after its original composition for *Gold Coast Customs* (1929). "Four in the

Morning" and "Black Mrs. Behemoth" (both assumed importance in the performed versions) were included after their composition for *Troy Park* in 1925.

2. The first five poems of this performance bear out this assertion: 1. "Madam Mouse Trots," 2. "The Wind's Bastinado," 3. "Jumbo's Lullaby," 4. "Small Talk" I and II, 5. "Rose Castles [Water Party]." Not until the sixth poem/ piece, "Hornpipe", do we have the sort of humour in writing and setting that is typically associated with *Façade*. "Madam Mouse" has a particularly minimalist accompaniment: a single tom-tom type of drum which would conventionally be associated with a jungle at night (indeed the setting of the poem). "Bastinado" and "Jumbo" also achieve a minimalist effect though by different means. The retreat from the explicit pain of modernity, from the influence of Eliot's *Waste Land* and Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*, is further emphasized in the changes between the April and June performances of 1926. In April the initial grouping of three fully orchestrated, tonally conventional and parodic pieces ("Hornpipe," "En Famille," "Mariner Man") is immediately contrasted with the next grouping ("Small Talk," "By the Lake," "Said King Pompey"). In June, "Small Talk" is dropped altogether and the first seven poems are similar, and familiar to us, in tone: "Hornpipe," "En Famille," "Mariner Man," "Scotch Rhapsody," "Valse," "Jodelling Song," and "Polka." As well, in June, "Switchback" and "Trams" are dropped from the

performance, and after June, "Aubade" and "Daphne" would also be dropped. The shifts between 1922 and 1926 gradually eliminate the dominance of an unsettled and variable harmonic and thematic character in favour of parodic commentary and quotation. The overall character of *Façade* became, in this time period, more like the "entertainment" it originally billed itself as, focused primarily on a critique of past styles and ideologies rather than a modernist lament on the state of contemporary culture (though the critique of the recent past certainly had implications for contemporary culture).

3. A. hough, in order to save face, the Sitwells exaggerated the audience's hostility, it is clear that it was bewildered by *Façade*. The boredom and anger that greeted this new work were partly a product of a bad performance but also a result of conservative listening habits. Of this event Edith Sitwell later said:

> . . . in June 1923, the first public performance at the Aeolian Hall was anything but peaceful. Never, I should think, was a larger and more imposing shower of brickbats hurled at any new work. These missiles have now been exchanged for equally large and imposing bouquets. But at that time there was not a bouquet to be seen. Indeed, the attitude of certain of the audience was so threatening that I was warned to stay on the platform, hidden by the curtain, until they got

tired of waiting for me and they went home (*Taken Care Of* 122).

Audience responses ran the gamut from praise to ridicule (as in Noel Coward's famous parody in his 1923 review *London Calling*, where the Sitwells became the "Whittlebot" family).

4. As in "Four in the Morning," "A Man from a Far Countree" is a first person expression of the desire and disenfranchisement of a "dark" man from afar. In this poem desire for the fair-haired women "Rose and Alice" is transformed, in the mouth of the dark man, into an experience of language: "Though I am black and not comely,/ Though I am black as the darkest trees,/ . . . /I will feed my words/ Until they skip like those fleecéd lambs" (score 50). The man belongs to the world of the sun, even though he is dark, and his words transform his dark "forest" into trees which house "golden birds". The shadow world, which serves as a repository for a repressed sexual desire, is also a space from which issues a constructing desire. Hair like a golden palace comes to rest in the dark trees: the impossible desire is transformed through its expression, through the voice of the designated "other."

5. The intersection between race and the eroticised "other" and gender ideologies is found in imperialism or the imperialist act. The sea, as the changeable element, is also the instrument of colonial domination and this domination has

a particularly patriarchal character. The poems in *Façade* continually come back to the seaman as motif, and he is often associated with patriarchal and Victorian power structures. In "Hornpipe," Captain Fracasse represents the exploitive representative of Queen Victoria who herself is closely associated with Tennyson. With the collaboration of "the fibroid Shah" ("the zebra'd emperor from Zanzibar"), the "new arisen Madam Venus" is laid before Victoria ("that shady lady") (*CP* 155). The implicit eroticism of the conquered "other" is mixed with an explicit denial on the part of the conqueress: "'This minx of course/ Is as sharp as any lynx and blacker-deeper than the drinks and quite as/ Hot as any hottentot, without remorse!/ For the minx,'/ Said she,/ 'And the drinks,/ You can see/ Are hot as any hottentot and not the goods for me!'" The "drinks" are wine drunk by the conquering captain Fracasse and "Sir Bacchus" which is made from "the black tarr'd grapes' blood." The grapes are not black but tarred black; that is, they are coloured black by the conquering armies (accompanied by the excess of European culture) and squeezed dry. In this poem, the representation of the foreign or exotic is characterized in the terms of the conquerors.

6. Though it would be impossible for me to prove that Sitwell critiques this assumption of the "natural" origins of functional tonality or diatonic harmony, it is worth noting that the ideology implied by this assumption of natural order

by Western music theorists is continually questioned by the very existence of musical cultures which are not dependent on the overtone series or diatonic harmony at all.

7. The explicit association between the stifling patriarchal family structure of Victorian culture and the professionals of imperialism is made in "En Famille." The family is literally hell, and hell is "just as properly proper/ As Greenwich, or as Bath, or Joppa" (*CP* 127). The figure of authority who establishes the definitions of propriety is the "Admiral." This Victorian Hell of the family is both inside and outside, inescapable. If the Admiral were to shout obscenities he might take his daughters into the "streets" of Hell where they would be able to call on the "scandalous" and beautiful Myrrhina. But because that pleasure is forbidden them as well, they remain in Hell regardless of their father's actions on their behalf.

Chapter Four: "Remembered As Knew": Saints Performing

1. The collaboration on the production of *Four Saints* heavily influenced its reception. All the elements that went into the performance, sets, choreography, music, had the effect of increasing the text's accessibility. Included in this collaboration is the scenario provided for the production by a friend and long-time companion of Thomson's, Maurice Grosser. Grosser offered a kind of narrative for the

various segments of the opera which enabled Stein's loose text to be staged. He broke sections of dialogue into tableaux which he labeled as specific scenes, such as "Love Scene," "Saint Theresa in Ecstasy" or "Vision of the Holy Ghost." Without actually introducing a cause-effect narrative relation, Grosser's scenario gives a visual and theatrical coherence to Stein's text which it otherwise lacks. Although his addition helped the production of *Four Saints*, it has also served as a limit on subsequent performances. The tableaux imposed on the libretto have remained as a performative help and hindrance.

2. Florine Stettheimer was a New York "society" lady and an important, if underrated, American painter. She had only one public exhibition in her lifetime which drew a mixed reaction from critics. Her fear of public exhibition was counterbalanced by an active social engagement with New York's artistic community. She painted portraits of many of her friends (Thomson and Carl Van Vechten included) and showed to friends not only her paintings but also her elaborate interior decorating (though the term seems to trivialize the innovation of her design).

3. An extended discussion of the implications of this intertext can be found in Corinne Blackmer's article "The Ecstasies of St. Teresa." Blackmer makes a convincing argument for the gender disruption of the eroticised image of

St. Teresa. St. Teresa, Blackmer argues, is an icon of operatic excess, a figure of homoerotic dissension from patriarchal definitions of feminine sexuality. Stein's St. Teresa specifically is a subtle lesbian opera diva who transforms, and transcends, apparently inflexible doctrines of gender. The article is perhaps flawed only in this reliance on the notion of transcendence, since Stein's text seems to argue for the materiality of language and art, rather than for a complete and mystical escape from signification.

4. While I am interpreting Thomson's decision to divide St. Teresa as an expression of that character's multivocality and excess, at least one critic has taken issue with this imposition on the libretto. Meg Albrinck's article, "'How can a sister see Saint Therese suitably'", makes a convincing argument for the staging and the scenario as reductive of Stein's potential textual plurality: "Thomson himself claimed that he merely wanted Saint Therese to be able to sing duets with herself, a testament perhaps to the polyvocality of Saint Therese in the libretto. . . . By splitting Saint Therese in two, the production ultimately presents the primary female figure as a divided self and the primary male character (Saint Ignatius) as a unified self" (8-9). Albrinck's argument centers mainly on the scenario prepared by Maurice Grosser, but it also addresses Thomson's initial decisions for the staging (such as dividing St. Teresa). The

act of staging is, itself, Albrinck argues, a limiting act since it subjects the female characters to the gaze of the audience and of the male characters. Grosser's scenario constructs both a passive spectacle of the female saint and a contrasting active and powerful representation of the male saints, particularly St. Ignatius. Using contemporary film theory, Albrinck suggests that the uncontainable and powerful feminine figure from the libretto is framed, limited and rendered relatively powerless by the scenario. As well, she suggests that Grosser's impositions on the libretto privilege a heterosexual eroticism over the more dispersed homoeroticism of the libretto. Since Stein's emphasis in her theatre is on the continuous present of movement, the fixity of spectacle acts in direct contradiction to Stein's feminist project. This article makes several valuable contributions to the study of Stein's theatre, especially as it addresses the Grosser scenario. The very limiting nature of this "narrative" imposition on Stein's text has remained largely unaddressed until now. As well, Albrinck engages in an important critique of representation of women in theatre and of a woman's theatrical text, using feminist film theory and the issue of specularity. While I find this article very useful, it does not address the musical settings also provided by Thomson. Again, these musical settings may function in a limiting and interpretive fashion -- indeed I think they often do. Nevertheless, the music also provides, along with the visual and gestural elements of performance, a

slippery dialogue with the words. This dialogue is not fixed but continuously in motion, or circulation. Thus, while Albrinck depends on psychoanalytic feminist film theory of spectacle, I find Judith Butler's notion of performative gender more productive for this theatrical project. I agree that Grosser's scenario is very limited and limiting, and I agree with Albrinck's final assertion that in future productions "directors must give Stein's original libretto precedence over Grosser's scenario" (20). However, I also feel that Stein's interest in *static* theatre, in conjunction with the theatre of continuous present, needs to be incorporated into any interpretation of Grosser's scenario and Thomson's staging. As well, as can be seen in the body of my analysis, I see Thomson's interpretation of the gender differences between St. Teresa and St. Ignatius as an ironic and critical one: St. Ignatius is revealed to be monologic and himself limited while St. Teresa remains fluid.

5. Gertrude Stein engaged, in other contexts, in many conflicted discourses on the subject of race. She greatly admired the work of some African-American writers and was peripheral to the Harlem Renaissance in which her friend Carl Van Vechten was heavily involved. As well, she was introduced to the art of West Africa through Picasso. Her attitudes were, like many modernists, celebratory of what she saw as a "primitive" life principle expressed in the work and personalities (really, stereotypes) of Africans and African-

Americans. She has been strongly criticized for her portrait of the "mixed-race" Melanctha in *Three Lives* (see Sonia Saldívar-Hull's article). While this story reveals the flexible conception of character taken to a further extreme in *Four Saints*, it also indulges in racist stereotypes: African-Americans as more natural, earthy and bestial than European-Americans.

Appendix A

Different versions of "Four in the Morning":

Selected Poems. London: Duckworth, 1936.

Cried the navy-blue ghost
Of Mr. Belaker
The allegro negro cocktail shaker,
"Why did the cock crow,
Why am I lost,
Down the endless road to Infinity tossed?
The tropical leaves are whispering white
As water; I race the wind in my flight.
The white lace houses are carried away
By the tide; far out the float and sway.
White is the nursemaid on the parade.
Is she real, as she flirts with me unafraid?
Such honeyed imbecility lies
In the eternal July skies
As in her giggling curls. I swirls
The houses fade, and drop in pearls.
I raced through the leaves as white as water . . .
Ghostly, flowed over the nursemaid, caught her,
Left her . . . edging the far-off sand
Is the foam of the sirens' Metropole and Grand,
And along the parade I am blown and lost,
Down the endless road to infinity toss'd.
The guinea-fowl plumaged houses sleep . . .
On one, I saw the lone grass weep,
Where only the whimpering greyhound wind
Chased me, raced me, for what it could find."
And there in the black and furry boughs
How slowly, coldly, old Time grows,
Where pigeons smelling of gingerbread,
And the spectacled owls so deeply read,
And the sweet ring-doves of curded milk,
Watch the Infanta's gown of silk
I the ghost room where the governante
Gesticulates lente, and walks andante.
"Madam, Princesses must be obedient;
FOr a medicine now becomes expedient, --
Of five ingredients, -- a diapente,"
Said the governante, fading lente . . .
In at the window then looked he,
The navy-blue ghost of Mr. Belaker,
The allegro negro cocktail-shaker,--
And his flattened face like the moon saw she,--
Rhinoceros-black (a flowing sea!).

Facade and Other Poems 1920-1935. London: Gerald Duckwoth & Co. Ltd., 1950.

To Evelyn Wiel

Cried the navy-blue ghost
Of Mr. Belaker
The allegro negro cocktail-shaker:
"Why did the cock crow,
Why am I lost
Down the endless road to Infinity toss'd?
I raced through the leaves as white as water . . .
Ghostly, flowed over the nursemaid, caught her,
Left her . . . edging the far-off sand
Is the foam of the sirens' Metropole and grand."
The guinea-fowl-plumaged houses sleep . . .
On one, I saw the lone grass weep,
Where the Infanta's gown of silk
In the ghost-room tall where the governante
Gesticulates lente and walks andante!
"Madam, Princesses must be obedient,
For a medicine now becomes expedient,
Of five ingredients, -- a diapente," --
Said the governante, fading lente.
In at the window then looked he --
The navy-blue ghost of Mr. Belaker,
The allegro negro cocktail-shaker ,--
And his flattened face like the moon saw she,--
Rhinoceros-black (a flowing sea!).

Facade. 1951. (score)

Cried the navy-blue ghost of Mister Belaker
The allegro negro cocktail shaker:
"Why did the cock-crow,
Why am I lost
Down the endless road to Infinity toss'd?
The tropical leaves are whispering white as water:
I racer the wind in my flight down the promenade,
Edging the far-off sand
Is the foam of the Metropole and Grand,--
As I raced through the leaves as white as water
My ghost flowed over a nursemaid, caught her,
And there I saw the long grass weep,
Where the guinea-fowl plumaged houses sleep
And the sweet ring doves of the curdled milk
Watch the Infanta's gown of silk
In the ghost-room tall where the governante
Whispers slyly fading andante.
In at the window then looked he
The navy-blue ghost of Mister Belaker,
The allegro negro cocktail shaker,--
And his flattened face like the moon saw she
Rhinoceros black yet flowing like the sea.

Collected Poems. 1957.

Cried the navy-blue ghost
Of Mr. Belaker
The allegro negro cocktail-shaker,
"Why did the cock crow,
Why am I lost,
Down the endless road to infinity toss'd?
The tropical leaves are whispering white
As water; I race the wind in my flight.
The white laces houses are carried away
By the tide; far out they float and sway.
White is the nursemaid on the parade.
Is she real, as she flirts with me unafraid?
I raced through the leaves as white as water . . .
Ghostly, flowed over the nursemaid, caught her,
Left her . . . edging the far-off sand
Is the foam of the Metropole and Grand.
And along the parade I am blown and lost,
Down the endless road to infinity toss'd.
The guinea-fowl-plumaged houses sleep . . .
On one, I saw the lone grass weep,
Where only the whimpering greyhound wind
Chased me, raced me, for what it could find."
And there in the black and furry boughs
How slowly, coldly, old Time grows,
Where the pigeons smelling of gingerbread,
And the spectacled owls so deeply read,
And the sweet-ringed doves of curdled milk,
Watch the Infanta's gown of silk
In the ghost-room tall where the governante
Gesticulates lente and walks andante.
"Madam, Princesses must be obedient;
For a medicine now becomes expedient,--
Of five ingredients, -- a diapente,"
Said the goverante, fading lente . . .
In at the window then looked he,
The navy-blue ghost of Mr. Belaker,
The allegro negro cocktail-shaker,--
And his flattened face like a moon saw she,--
Rhinoceros-black (a flowing sea!).

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